



Wye Valley  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
(AONB)

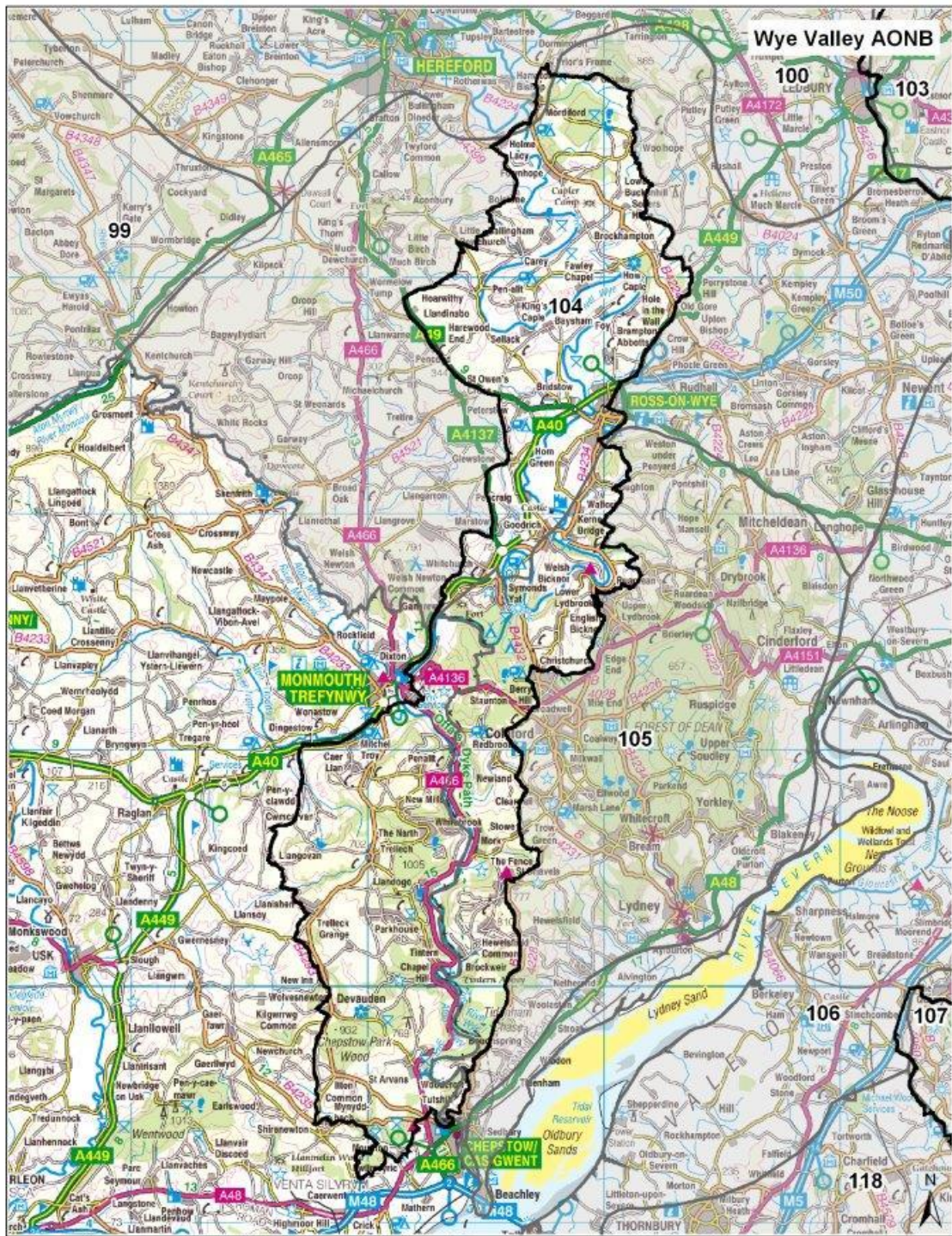
Management Plan  
Finalised for adoption

2021-2026

January 2021

Wye Valley AONB Office  
Hadnock Road  
Monmouth  
NP25 3NG

**Map 1: Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Boundary**




Base mapping Ordnance Survey 1:250,000 GB Atlas. NOTE: not to scale; actual scale differs due to variations in size of individual Protected Areas.

0 2 4 6 Kilometres

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Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
 Joint Character Areas

This map was created as part of the Second Assessment of Change in Countryside Quality 1998 - 2003.



## **Forewords**

### **Minister for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity, DEFRA**

*[insert photo]*

I am fortunate that England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit.

This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set its ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of natural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. The Government welcomes the Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover - the first of its kind for generations - to ensure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people - farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff - for the beautiful places they live and work. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for [name of AONB]. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value [name of AONB]. I would like to thank all those involved in preparation of this document, and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity  
Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)**



## **Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Welsh Government**

*[insert photo]*

On behalf of Welsh Government, I welcome the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks contain some of the most beautiful, spectacular and dramatic areas of countryside in Wales. These are landscapes of national importance with designation conferring the highest status for the conservation of landscape. Millions of visitors enjoy these special qualities every year.

AONBs and National Parks have seldom been higher in the public and political consciousness. Green and wild spaces give people respite and opportunities to breathe freely. However they have also been placed under great pressure, and sadly abused by some. We must - through Management Plans and the actions that flow from them - enable visitors to have world-class experiences while ensuring the special qualities we seek to protect are not damaged. The interests of local communities, businesses and land managers must also be at the forefront of our minds.

Balancing these interests and priorities requires genuinely collaborative approaches. AONB Management plans are embodiments of this collaboration and as such I attach great importance to them.

The State of Natural Resources Report shows that none of Wales' ecosystems are currently showing all the attributes of resilience. Overall, biological diversity is declining, and the extent of some habitats has also declined significantly. We must take action to create resilient ecological networks across Wales. This includes restoring protected sites and peatlands, and creating a National Forest, which includes sites in the Wye Valley. Nature-based solutions are also helping us prepare for the impacts of climate change.

This Management Plan for the Wye Valley AONB exemplifies the practice of tackling complex environmental and social challenges through robust local collaboration in a way which enhances the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and makes a strong contribution to the well-being of future generations of citizens in Wales.

AONBs cover around 5% of Wales's land area and are therefore key partners in delivering a wide range of national and local priorities. They have often been sidelined and overlooked when compared to National Parks. In the coming years I hope that the progress that has been made in raising the profile and ambition of our AONBs can continue.

The Welsh Government looks forward to supporting the implementation of this Plan.

**Lesley Griffiths AS | MS**

**Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig, Llywodraeth Cymru  
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Welsh Government**

## **Chairperson of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee**

*[insert photo]*

Welcome to the Management Plan for the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As Chairperson of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee it gives me great pleasure to introduce this our fourth statutory Management Plan. The Wye Valley was designated an AONB 50 years ago, in 1971. It is an honour and a pleasure to have a hand in caring for this tremendous national landscape, with all its natural and cultural assets and Special Qualities, straddling the English-Welsh border. This Plan is prepared on behalf of the four local authorities covering the Wye Valley AONB, under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. But everyone has a part to play in shaping the future of this outstanding piece of countryside, particularly at this time of such great pressure and change for society and the environment, locally and globally.

This Management Plan is for everybody with an interest in the Wye Valley. It is as much for the individuals who live and work in the AONB, as it is for those that visit and enjoy the area, as well as the businesses, local authorities, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations that operate in the AONB. Significantly all the public bodies have a duty, under section 85 of the CRoW Act, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. Inside this plan you will find listed the Special Qualities that contribute to the international importance of this landscape. The document lays out the vision for the AONB with policies, in the form of Strategic Objectives, to conserve and enhance the area over the next five years.

On behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee I would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who contributed to reviewing the previous Management Plan and producing this one. They can take pride in the result. I hope we can be proud of the achievements we make in implementing this Management Plan and progressing the conservation of this outstandingly natural and beautiful area. I therefore look forward to everyone with an interest and an involvement in the AONB using this document to guide their actions and ensuring we hand onto the next generation an area still worthy of its national designation.

**Councillor Ann Webb**  
**Monmouthshire County Council**  
**Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Chairperson**

## Declaration

This Management Plan was produced and adopted by the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee on behalf of the four local authorities, under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000:

Chairman  
Wye Valley AONB JAC (signature)

Councillor  
Cabinet Member for Environment,  
Forest of Dean District Council (signature)

Lead Commissioner – Strategic Infrastructure,  
Gloucestershire County Council (signature)

Councillor  
Cabinet Member, Economic Development and Community Services,  
Herefordshire Council (signature)

Councillor  
Cabinet Member, MonLife  
Monmouthshire County Council (signature)

Area Manager,  
Natural England (West Midlands) (signature)

Head of South East Wales Operations,  
Natural Resources Wales (signature)

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## **PART 1   CONTEXT**

### **The naming of things**

first there is rock, splitting in the boiling air and the heaving  
of land, and then the soft touch: water finding its way

drip  
drip  
flow

then the grip of ice and a slow sculpting of liquid intent,  
sibilance through earth, the stroking of stone

the river writes itself, brings gossip from the mountains,  
presents itself to the sea so that clouds meet salt  
and fish drink both

millennia pass before there is a naming of things

words are conjured from noise and light and the feeling  
of rock and air and rain on skin

imagine hearing the sound of the river through trees  
above the crackle of a constant fire in your cave, twelve thousand  
years ago, with birds and sunslant as clocks  
and clouds as guides

how your tongue might have curled around the echo of water,  
how your body might have quivered as the river trusted you  
with all its gifts, with the mirroring of sky, with the secret  
of its name:

guoy  
vaga  
Gwy  
Wye

a name passed on from mother to daughter, father to son,  
and gifts taken, way beyond need, repaid with the slippage of soil,  
poisons and greed

today, as the ailing river flows through a depleted land  
listen - you might hear it speak its name,  
again, and again, and again

Wye  
Wye  
Wye

Harriet Fraser

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of the AONB Management Plan

1.1.1 This Management Plan, under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, formulates local authority policy and action in relation to the management of the Wye Valley AONB. Regard will be given to this Management Plan which is a material consideration in the respective Core Strategies and Local Development Plans / Local Development Frameworks of the constituent local authorities, under National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Wales.

1.1.2 The AONB Management Plan is a place-based plan derived through local consensus. It seeks to define the approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB through the application of local solutions to local challenges that also respect the national and international importance of the AONB. It is a plan for the AONB, the landscape and the people who live in, work in and visit it - not just the AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and AONB staff Unit. Like its predecessors, this Management Plan provides guidance and strategic objectives, giving support and direction to help steer positive landscape change, particularly to those bodies that make up the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee and the wider AONB Partnership. It also provides guidance to the local communities and many landowners, residents and visitors in the area. The Management Plan is thus for all the bodies and individuals whose actions affect the AONB and who can play an important part in helping to conserve and enhance the outstanding landscape of the lower Wye Valley, for the benefit of both current and future generations. However this Plan does not provide all the answers for the next five years. It addresses the implications for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. Meanwhile it complements a range of plans, strategies and programmes that cover other aspects in the administrative areas covering the Wye Valley AONB. In this context it articulates the value of the landscape and the added value brought by the designation and the role of the partners in the AONB in supporting society's needs through an integrated approach to land management.

1.1.3 This is the fourth statutory 5 year Management Plan following the earlier non-statutory Plans of 1992 and 1981. Therefore this Management Plan sits in the context, and should inform subsequent iterations, of the following:-

National: National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949,  
Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000,  
Agriculture Act 2020  
National Planning Policy Framework,  
Planning Policy Wales,  
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015  
Environment (Wales) Act 2016  
UK Climate Change Risk Assessment  
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment  
Valued and Resilient: Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of  
Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks  
Prosperity for all: a Low Carbon Wales  
South East Wales Area Statement

County/District: Forest of Dean Core Strategy,

Gloucestershire Minerals Local Plan,  
Gloucestershire Waste Core Strategy (Waste Local Plan).  
Herefordshire Local Plan & Core Strategy,  
Monmouthshire Local Development Plan.  
Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-Being Plan  
Monmouthshire Destination Plan  
Herefordshire Destination Management Plan  
Wye Nutrient Management Plan

Local: Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Destination Management Plan  
Neighbourhood Development Plans  
State of the AONB Report,  
AONB Management Plan Action Plan,  
Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)  
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)  
Wye Valley AONB Partnership guidance notes and positions statements.  
The SEA & HRA contain a list of policy documents relevant to the Wye Valley AONB.

1.1.4 The preparation of this Management Plan was commenced in mid-July 2018. Biodiversity, Landscape and Planning officers from the Local Authorities met to discuss the format of the review of the Management Plan 2015-2020 including undertaking a SWOT analysis. The JAC, in November 2018, endorsed the conclusion that the 2015-2020 Management Plan remained a sound foundation on which to base this Plan. The core of the last Plan was still robust and the timetable difference with other strategies & legislation would seem to make a ‘full review’ more applicable to the preparation of the subsequent Plan (2026-2031). Therefore a proportionate and balanced ‘light touch’ review was proposed which modifies and updates the Plan, but retains tried and tested policies and content as appropriate.

1.1.5 A Consultation Draft AONB Management Plan 2020-25 was published in September 2019 with a 12 week public consultation period. In addition two public ‘drop-in’ sessions were held in Ross-on-Wye and Brockweir in December 2019 to provide further opportunities for everybody to inspect and comment on the new AONB Management Plan. The consequent Post-Consultation Draft Management Plan was endorsed by the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) in November 2020 and recommended for adoption to the Local Authorities. Screening Reports for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) were also consulted on by, in England: Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England and in Wales: Cadw, Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government, between July and September 2020. The Management Plan has also been subject to a Future Generations Evaluation, which includes Equalities and Sustainability Impact Assessments. A revised HRA Screening assessment was conducted in December 2020 on the request of Natural England on the modifications to the AONB Management Plan from the 2015-2020 version. The SEA and HRA screening concluded that the Plan is unlikely to display significant [detrimental] environmental effects, either alone or in combination. It is recognised that a ‘full review’ will be applicable for the preparation of the subsequent Plan (2026-2031).

## 1.2 AONB designation

1.2.1 The 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland cover approximately 1/8th of the land surface. Together with National Parks, AONBs represent our most outstanding national landscapes; unique and irreplaceable assets, each with such distinctive character and natural beauty that they are recognised and designated nationally to be managed in the interest of everyone – local residents, businesses, visitors, and the wider public - and protected for future generations. The AONBs are the product of people and place and are cultural landscapes of local and national value. They are also recognised internationally as part of the global Protected Areas Family.

1.2.2 The rich combination of breath-taking views, impressive geology, historic legacies and diverse wildlife in the valley of the River Wye between Hereford and Chepstow led to the designation, in 1971, of the valley and adjoining plateaux and hills as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Wye Valley AONB covers 92km (58 miles) of the lower reaches of the River Wye totalling an area of 327km<sup>2</sup> (128 square miles), being 45km North to South and 11.3 km at its widest (East - West) point. It stretches from Mordiford in the north, just east of the city of Hereford, southwards to the outskirts of Chepstow (see Map 1).

1.2.3 The Wye Valley AONB is unique among the 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and 14 National Parks in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland in being the only protected landscape to straddle a national boundary; being 64% in England and 36% in Wales. This provides a number of challenges and opportunities for the management of the Wye Valley AONB.

1.2.4 **The primary purpose of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (and National Parks) is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.** This was laid out over seventy years ago in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, modified in the Countryside Act 1968 and confirmed for AONBs in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Supplementary purposes to the AONB designation were developed by government agencies in the 1990s (the Countryside Commission and Countryside Council for Wales ‘AONBs: A Policy Statement CCP 356, 1991’ and reiterated by the Countryside Agency in ‘CA 24, November 2001’). These further AONB purposes as follows:-

- In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of the local communities.
- Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.
- Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met in an AONB so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.

These broader purposes are reflected in the constitution of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

1.2.5 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty share equal status with National Parks in terms of scenic beauty and landscape protection. This was reinforced in the National

Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 172) and Planning Policy Wales (PPW para 6.3.8).

1.2.6 Unlike National Parks, AONBs are not authoritative bodies with their own planning or development control functions and other executive powers. Instead, responsibility for the designated purposes lies chiefly with the local authorities, for the Wye Valley AONB being Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council. The government departments and agencies responsible for designating AONBs and advising Government and others on how AONBs should be protected and managed are Defra, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

1.2.7 The CRoW Act (Section 85) also requires that relevant authorities, in addition to government and local planning authorities, ‘have regard’ to the purpose of AONBs. These include parish, town and community councils and the holders of public office.

1.2.8 On the grounds of good citizenship and guardianship at least, a duty of care for the AONB also lies with individuals and organisations (private or third sector), especially those who own or manage land in the AONB and also with the visitors to the area.

1.2.9. The National Association for AONBs ‘Art in the Landscapes – Connecting People to Nature’ strategy states “We have a history of expressing the value of AONBs through the language of policy, by which the emotions of place are inadequately distilled into the tools of protection, but the reality is that we experience landscape; it triggers emotion. To describe landscape to others without invoking an experience is to fundamentally ignore our relationship with place and miss what it is to be human.”

### **1.3 What is Natural Beauty?**

1.3.1 The term ‘natural beauty’ first gained currency in a legislative context in the 1907 Act which gave legal status to the National Trust (‘for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty’). The 1931 Addison Report on mechanisms to preserve the countryside by National Park status includes the phrase "to improve the means of access for pedestrians to areas of natural beauty". It has been the basis for the designation of both AONBs and National Parks since the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 in which, however, the term was not defined.

1.3.2 In the 1949 Act ‘Natural beauty’ replaced other phrases such as ‘landscape beauty’ and ‘characteristic landscape beauty’. These provide a clue to the importance of landscape character and beauty as an aesthetic experience. ‘Character’ is interpreted in different ways with the Landscape Institute focusing on the pattern of landscape elements, while landscape archaeologists see the human process of a palimpsest landscape ‘coming into being’, and ecologists consider the quality of the natural processes and ecological systems which underpin patterns of topography and vegetation. Natural beauty encompasses all of these views.

1.3.3 Natural Beauty is defined in the Countryside Act 1968 as “flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features”. These aspects of natural beauty are the components that make a landscape so scenic and distinctive; the wildlife, trees and plants, and the shape of the land with its rivers and hills and rock outcrops. However, it is recognised and understood that 'natural' landscapes of the British Isles are the product of millennia of human intervention. Therefore landscape is about the relationship between people and place; the interaction between nature and culture. Subsequent government guidance provides a further definition: ‘The natural beauty of AONBs encompasses everything – ‘natural’ and human – that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, cultural associations, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it.’ Public appreciation is a key component of natural beauty and considerable provision for recreation and tourism in AONBs were made in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Natural beauty goes well beyond just scenic or aesthetic value. The 2019 Colchester Declaration, by the National Association for AONBs, states that “Natural Beauty has intrinsic value and means so much to people”.

1.3.4 This Management Plan defines the natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB through the Statement of Significance, Landscape Features and the Special Qualities of the AONB, as outlined below. These encompass sense of place, landscape beauty, scenic beauty, amenity, natural and cultural heritage and landscape assets.

## **2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND VISION**

### **2.1 Statement of Significance for the Wye Valley AONB**

2.1.1 The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is regarded as one of **the finest lowland landscapes in Britain**, with the River Wye one the **nation’s favourite rivers**. The AONB, straddling the English Welsh border, with the river as the centrepiece, is an area of striking contrasts. In the north, the river meanders through the **broad meadows** of the Herefordshire lowlands. The more dramatic scenery, including famous spots like Symonds Yat and Tintern Abbey, lie downstream from Ross-on-Wye. Here the river has cut **dramatic gorges** with sheer **cliffs and steep wooded slopes**, interspersed with broader valley reaches, with rounded hills and bluffs.

2.1.2 The Wye Valley AONB contains a **splendid variety of geological outcrops** and important examples of **active and past geomorphologic processes**. Formed over millions of years, the underlying rocks have been worked on by ice and then the river to produce the landscape of the Wye Valley we recognise today. The differing geology has given rise to a **range of distinctive settlement and farming patterns**. The oldest rocks are the Silurian limestones and sandstones that make up the grey soils of the Woolhope Dome in the north of the AONB. The Old Red Sandstone creates the fertile red and brown soils of the Herefordshire lowlands along with the rich river alluvium of the floodplain. These softer rocks allowed the river to meander more widely. From Lydbrook the river cuts in and out of the harder Carboniferous Limestone strata of the Forest of Dean plateau to form dramatic gorges. The area has



a **full sequence of the Carboniferous Limestone Series** and excellent exposures and formations including limestone pavement, quartz conglomerate, caves, natural stream channels and tufa dams. There are 2 geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 26 designated Local Geological Sites (LGS). These include sites with rocks formed in marine conditions, some highly fossiliferous, and some deposited on semi-arid land surfaces. There are deposits of iron minerals, river terraces formed in interglacial conditions, landslip areas and calcareous tufa deposits which are still forming.

2.1.3 The Wye Valley is particularly important for its **rich wildlife habitats**. This is reflected in the remarkable juxtaposition of three separate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), under the European Union's Habitats Directive. The river is a SAC as well as being the first major river to be designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) along its entire length. Nearly a thousand hectares of valley side woodland are also designated a SAC. Nine roosting sites for Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats make a third SAC. Across the AONB there are 46 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) including 4 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and 204 County local wildlife sites. The limestone woodlands are renowned as a refuge of rare species and form part of **one of the largest remaining areas of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland in the country**. In 2019 Pine Martens were re-introduced to the area. As a predominantly wooded and riverine environment, the Wye Valley has a greater combination of ancient and natural features than virtually all the other AONBs and National Parks in the UK. Priority Habitats cover nearly 17% of the English part of the AONB. The traditional orchards, pastures, hay meadows, hedges and copses within the farmed landscape also provide rich habitats for wildlife. The strong mosaic of these habitats makes the landscape robust and permeable for many species.

2.1.4 The AONB contains an abundance of sites of historic and cultural significance. Many activities **fundamental to the cultural identity of Britain** have an origin in the Wye Valley. This is reflected in the fact that there are 125 Scheduled Monuments (SMs) in the Wye Valley AONB, 11 registered Parks and Gardens, 22 Conservation Areas and 959 Listed Buildings. The river is both the backbone and the border of the historic environment that underlays the landscape of the Wye Valley AONB. There is a range of distinctive settlement types and patterns, field systems, and vernacular building styles and materials. The whole of the lower Wye Valley, from Goodrich to Chepstow, has been included in the **Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest** in Wales. Features range from caves with Palaeolithic occupation, ancient forests, Roman and Celtic settlements, defensive structures such as hill forts, Offa's Dyke and Mediaeval castles, secluded early churches and monasteries. Tributaries cascade down side valleys to join the Wye, giving focus to settlements and power to **pioneering industries** including wireworks, papermaking, tanning, tin-plate and quarrying. The river was the main transport route up and down the valley, superseded by the railway and eventually the roads. The scenic qualities of the Wye Valley are important in the history of art. Landscaped parks, gardens and viewpoints inspired some of the great British poets and writers. The Reverend William Gilpin was inspired in 1770 to write his treatise on the notion and depiction of landscape and gave birth to the **'picturesque' movement**. As a result of his work the valley became very popular with visitors.

2.1.5 The lower Wye Valley remains nationally renowned as a **destination for tourism and recreation** with 2.3 million tourist days per annum. Overnight stays, while common, are outweighed by day trips with many people travelling for less than 2 hours to visit the Wye Valley. Amongst these visitors are some of the **29,300 residents** living and/or working in the market towns, villages and hamlets of the Wye Valley AONB.

2.1.6 The **high quality environment** of the lower Wye Valley makes a significant contribution to the area's economic development. The **water quality** of the Wye enables abstraction of drinking water at Lydbrook and Monmouth. The natural beauty of the area is recognised as **contributing to economic activities and well-being** such as tourism and inward investment, as well as the overall **quality of life**, making the Wye Valley a more attractive place in which to live and work. However, the general locality is renowned for limited job opportunities. Many residents work outside the AONB, often commuting to Birmingham, Bristol or Cardiff. The reality for some is an area of low incomes, limited housing, inadequate services and poor transport.

2.1.7 **Agriculture, forestry and tourism** are the main industries that operate in the landscape of the lower Wye Valley along with mineral extraction. Combined together they have to a large extent **crafted the landscape** we see today. Agriculture and forestry are the most apparent land uses with farmland covering 58% of the AONB and woodland 27%. There is a great diversity of enterprises dependant on all these industries, which tend to be characterised by low pay and seasonal employment. The viability of some of these businesses can have significant implication for the natural beauty and social well-being of the area. Tourism, from the early days of The Wye Tour, has focused on the river corridor and the market towns. It is still predominantly based around **enjoyment of the scenic beauty** and the **palimpsest heritage** of the Wye Valley. With increasing diversification tourism is spreading throughout the AONB. Limestone extraction continues at one commercial quarry, with another abutting the AONB boundary. Neither of these quarries are operating at full capacity at the moment.

2.1.8 The majority of employment in the AONB comes from distribution, education, manufacturing, public administration and tourism. The growth of environmentally beneficial activities in these sectors is becoming an increasingly important factor in the local economy. For example the increased interest in **locally produced food** is generating renewed investment locally in environmental land management, local food processing and distribution, food tourism, education and recreation. Other influences that have the potential to benefit the local economy include changes in working practices and the development of woodfuel and other local renewable energy technologies.

2.1.9 The **Special Qualities of the Wye Valley AONB**, which contribute significantly to the ecosystem goods and services of the area, are listed below and tabulated in Table 8.

1. Overall Landscape

of 16 Landscape Management Zones (see Table 1 & Map 2 - at rear) with key features and links to the other Special Qualities

*Biodiversity*

2. Woodlands

3. The river & tributaries
4. Species-rich grassland, including small field pattern of un/semi-improved grassland, often bounded by drystone walls or old hedges
5. Boundary habitat diversity & connectivity, e.g. between grassland & woodland, farmland & heathland, tidal river & ASNW, hedges &/or drystone walls, lanes, banks, verges and fields & woods

*Geological*

6. Silurian Rocks
7. Lower Devonian Old Red Sandstone
8. Quartz Conglomerate
9. Carboniferous Limestone
10. Riverine geomorphology

*Visual and Sensory*

11. Picturesque, extensive & dramatic views.
12. Overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness / wildness

*Historic Environment*

13. Prehistoric sites from Palaeolithic to Iron Age
14. Roman and early Medieval sites including Offa's Dyke
15. Mediaeval Defensive and Ecclesiastical sites and associated landscapes
16. Post-medieval industrial sites and associated landscapes
17. Railway heritage
18. Ancient and veteran trees
19. Historic / registered parks and gardens
20. Vernacular architecture: Farmsteads, Commoners cottages, Estate houses

*Language*

21. Welsh language & accent; Forest of Dean & South Herefordshire dialects & accents

*Access and Recreation*

22. Old tracks: often in sunken ways &/or bounded by drystone walls
23. Offa's Dyke Path
24. Wye Valley Walk
25. Access land
26. Small commons; largest are Coppet Hill, Broadmoor, Staunton Meend, Whitelye, The Hudnalls

*Other*

27. Orchards

## **2.2 The Vision for the Wye Valley AONB**

2.2.1 The following was developed for the 2009-14 AONB Management Plan as a 20 year vision and remains a true encapsulation of how we want the AONB to be in 15 years' time and beyond:-

*The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be a landscape*

- *that continues to evoke inspiration in a wide range of people*
- *where some degree of change is accepted and its impacts accommodated through positive management including effective adaptation to and mitigation of climate change*

- *where the distinctive mix of steep valley sides and rolling hills, covered with ancient and semi-natural woodland, mixed farmland, and scattered settlement dominate the landscape along with the meandering river*
- *where the natural and heritage assets are in good order, well-understood and accessible where appropriate, in fully compatible uses and adapted and changed in ways which respect and enhance their significance*
- *with a robust mosaic of inter-connected semi natural habitats for native wildlife, particularly around grassland, wetland and woodland*
- *providing functioning services and resources for society, including flood storage, food, timber, tourism and minerals*
- *which provides work for local people, who make good use of the varied resources the area has to offer*
- *where both visitors and residents are able to enjoy the area, particularly for sustainable tourism, recreation and informed appreciation of the historic and natural environment, with minimal conflict or disturbance from other users*
- *where association with the Wye Valley continues to benefit the surrounding villages, market towns and counties*
- *supported by the good will, pride and endeavour of local people, visitors, and the public, private and voluntary sectors*
- *worthy of its designation as an internationally important protected landscape.*

### **3. MANAGING CHANGE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

3.1.1 The Wye Valley has always been subject to natural and cultural changes and this will inevitably continue. Our actions inexorably lead to change and we have to recognise and adapt to change. The increasing impacts of climate change and loss of biodiversity are particularly significant. The countryside has evolved as a result of natural processes and land management practices and this evolution will continue as demands from consumers and users continue to change. It is neither possible nor desirable to ‘fossilise’ a landscape, and we must aim to keep a living, working and functioning countryside. Table 2 and Table 8 below outline what the landscape features and Special Qualities of the area are that people value and wish to see remaining in the landscape, and the ecosystem goods and services that the landscape provides. Understanding these interrelations helps us recognise what is required to manage, adapt and sustain those assets and services, the natural resources and natural capital, for future generation.

3.1.2 In the past change has often been quite gradual. Today the nature, speed and extent of changes induced by climate change, modern lifestyles and management practices are more threatening to the ecosystems, landscape and natural beauty. Indeed the speed and scale of changes in lifestyles, agriculture and transport in the last seventy years are unprecedented and, along with the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, threaten to degrade distinctive landscape features and wildlife habitats; but there are opportunities to adapt and arrest destructive change in places.

3.1.3 Many of the pressures we face now will erode the assets and character of the area unless we make positive choices about what we want to see happen, and make sometimes difficult decisions to achieve this. Thus the impetus in the AONB needs to focus on the most effective solutions to managing those factors influencing change. The challenge is to conserve the distinctive features and Special Qualities of the AONB, to maintain the ecosystem services the area provides and to seek to enhance all of these where they are judged to be deteriorating. We must do this for the benefit of current and future generations.

3.1.4 The main activities and pressures in the AONB are laid out in Table 9 below. This identifies the impacts that are likely to force change in the Wye Valley AONB over the next five years and beyond. These need to be recognised and managed, or the cumulative effect of all these changes could have a significant detrimental impact on the Special Qualities and ecosystems of the AONB.

3.1.5 The outbreak of the Coronavirus (Covid-19), declared by the World Health Organisation as a “Global Pandemic” in March 2020, has impacted the global and national economy and disrupted social, cultural and travel norms. This social and economic emergency, combined with the climate and ecological emergency, will have a significant, but as yet uncertain, impact on the landscape, nature and culture of the area. However the opportunity for a Green Recovery is widely recognised.

## **3.2 Forces for Change**

Some of the most dominant forces for change are outlined below:-

### **3.2.1 Climate change & Climate emergency:**

3.2.1.1 In 1971, when the Wye Valley was designated an AONB, the globally averaged CO<sub>2</sub> concentration in the atmosphere was 326 parts per million (ppm). These have now risen to 411ppm and are expected to increase further. This is having a significant impact on temperatures with the years between 2015 and 2018 being the four warmest on record. The Exponential Climate Action Roadmap report (2018) states “The world is on the verge of a tipping point. The analysis presented here confirms it is necessary, desirable and achievable to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in every sector of the economy with existing technologies, and momentum is growing. But crossing the tipping point will require large-scale behavioural change driven by greater climate leadership, stronger policies and the application of exponential technologies. By exponential technologies we mean both technologies and business models that are designed to reach a global scale rapidly – within a decade. Aligning their disruptive capability with climate goals will be crucial.... If

successful, we are at the start of one of the most exciting and dramatic changes in human history.”

3.2.1.2 The local authorities covering the AONB and Welsh Government have declared a climate emergency. The Committee on Climate Change recommends a new emissions target for the UK of net-zero greenhouse gases by 2050 with a 95% reduction target in Wales. A net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target for 2050 will deliver on the UK’s commitment made by signing the Paris Agreement. In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned the world that "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented" changes were needed if the climate crisis was to be tackled effectively. The 2018 IPCC Special Report ‘Global warming of 1.5°C’ states:-

*“Climate-related risks for natural and human systems are higher for global warming of 1.5°C than at present, but lower than at 2°C.*

*“On land, impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems, including species loss and extinction, are projected to be lower at 1.5°C of global warming compared to 2°C.*

*“Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5°C and increase further with 2°C.”*

3.2.1.3 The changing climate is likely to have significant direct and indirect impacts on landscape character, local distinctiveness and quality. Flooding and drought events, more frequent extreme weather, erosion, wildfires, diseases affecting tree cover and changing land cover, habitats and species ranges are examples of how the landscape may change to a greater or lesser degree, in the short or long term. Landscape changes may also be evident from mitigation measures, such as renewable energy generation, water resource management and adaptation through the planned expansion of woodland.

3.2.1.4 The UK Climate Change Projections (UKCP18) projects greater chance of hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Across Wales by 2050, average annual temperatures are projected to increase by 2.3 degrees. In summer, daily maximum temperatures are projected to increase by 3.4 degrees and in winter daily minimum temperatures are predicted to increase by 2.5 degrees. Rainfall is projected to increase in winter on average by 14% and decrease in summer by 16%, however overall the total annual average rainfall is predicted to remain the same.

3.2.1.5 The effects of climate change may not be that consistent over the 5 years of this Plan. However we are likely to encounter more energy in weather system and more extreme weather, with potentially prolonged summer heatwaves but when it does rain it will be more intense. Wet winters are likely to get wetter and flood risk will become more severe in some places. We may swing from not having enough water to dealing with too much. There are potentially increased risks from interdependencies - the cumulative impacts of multiple weather events in a short period. Therefore some of the most likely outcomes are:

- Greater fluctuations in water table levels
- Increases in localised flooding, and associated pollution risks, soil erosion and property and crop damage. For example, heavy rainfall may result in soil erosion higher up the Wye resulting in pollution of the water course downstream



- Increase in storm events may result in greater tree fall and land slip, particularly in the steep Wye Valley woodlands resulting in damage to and blocking of roads
- Bridges may be at risk from increased river flows and accumulation of storm debris.
- Changes in species distribution (including arrival of non-native species and potential loss of species for which suitable climate conditions disappear)
- Changes in phenology (timing of natural events such as migratory patterns of winter and summer visiting birds, egg laying dates, emergence of flowers and leaves etc.)
- Increased levels of over wintering pest species
- Potential for new pests and diseases of crops, trees and livestock
- Increased spring and summer fire risks on woodland and heathland
- Increased storm damage to, and losses of, field and hedgerow trees
- Introductions of new crops and increased viability of existing crops, for example vineyards.
- Changing patterns of visitor numbers with increased usage throughout the year and particularly during the ‘shoulder’ seasons of spring and autumn
- Increased vulnerability of historic environment features (e.g. wetter ground conditions on monuments causing greater poaching, increased decay of redundant farm buildings, erosion or damage of bankside archaeological features and structures such as bridges, watermills, wharves and forges.

Much of the above increase risks for businesses, who need to make sure they are resilient and can keep going through periods of disruption. In the River Wye water flows are maintained above an agreed minimum level by releases from the Elan Valley Reservoirs to ensure sufficient water levels for drinking water abstractions from the Wye at Lydbrook and Monmouth and also to protect the aquatic environment.

3.2.1.6 The challenges for delivering such significant change include priorities for decarbonising homes, energy and agriculture; improving carbon sequestration, resource use and efficiency and maintaining industrial competitiveness. As well as drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, we will also need to change the way we do things to take account of the changes in climate and maintain ecosystem functions. There is a need to ‘act locally’ and to address the contribution that the AONB and AONB based activities, such as tourism, transport, exploitation of renewable materials, design and siting of housing, etc. can make to reducing greenhouse gas emissions while building resilience for our well-being and future generations.

3.2.1.7 Ecological connectivity and robust habitat networks, including hedgerow, will allow for the movement of mobile species in the face of climate change. Restored habitats can be utilised to reduce the impacts of extreme events related to climate change. For example, restored woodlands and wetlands and natural flood management measures can help alleviate the impacts of flooding. The adoption of an integrated landscape-scale approach will create more resilient networks and habitats that improve the adaptive capacity of the countryside and the maintenance of ecosystem services.

3.2.1.8 Green Infrastructure is a clear mechanism that delivers ecosystem services in which landscape, biodiversity, accessibility and quality of life benefits are supported through sustainable communities. Green Infrastructure can therefore play a vital role in tackling climate change, by:-

- Sustaining diversity by promoting ecological connectivity and robust habitats.
- Restoring and managing habitats e.g. woodlands/vegetation, to help reduce flooding and offset air pollution whilst also conserving the key features and characteristics which have led to the AONB designation that make it so attractive to locals and visitors today.
- Providing sustainable urban drainage and natural flood management (NFM) to absorb excess rainfall and ensuring the character of the river and tributaries are not degraded.
- Contributing space to grow foods using sustainable methods thus promoting healthy diets for local communities but also enhancing biodiversity, providing jobs and educational benefits.
- Safeguarding accessible green space which helps reduce the effects of urban heat islands and also contributes to people's sense of health and well-being as well as having economic benefits relating to tourism.
- Reducing carbon emissions through encouraging alternative modes of transport by walking and cycling whilst also supporting health, well-being and tourism.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW 10) places an emphasis on delivering multi-functional benefits within development through the provision of integrated green infrastructure. Building with Nature was developed in Gloucestershire and is a nationally recognised benchmark of excellence for Green Infrastructure.

3.2.1.9 Key challenges in tackling adaptation to climate change will be the speed with which we need to share and adopt good practice. Some measures to adapt to predicted changes might have unintended consequences for the landscape, historic environment and biodiversity, such as new reservoirs or renewable energy infrastructure. Therefore good planning is required to reduce negative impacts and secure positive benefits. The UK's third Climate Change Risk Assessment evidence report is due in 2021.

**3.2.2 Standardisation:** The overall pressure for standardisation in many aspects of life can have an erosive effect on the natural beauty and distinctive character of an area. The cumulative effect of the replacement of locally distinctive features with standardised materials can create a creeping urbanisation of the rural landscape. Standardised highways infrastructure, replacing drystone walls with mortared walls, hard surfacing of green lanes or uniform design in a new development are all examples of adopting standards that may not complement the landscape features and Special Qualities of the AONB. Examples of damaging and cumulative effects suggest that these issues need greater consideration within planning applications in the AONB.

**3.2.3 Agriculture:** There are considerable challenges for farming in the UK, with the UK's departure from the EU potentially having an impact on market access, welfare standards and future subsidy arrangements. There is movement towards a system of payment for 'public goods' in areas such as environmental and animal welfare standards. The UK's reduction targets on greenhouse gas emissions also puts agriculture as a key area which requires action to meet targets. There is uncertainty

around how productivity fits into this mix and how the system will promote sustainability and stewardship while enabling efficient and competitive farming with reduced emissions and increased carbon sequestration. Farmers need to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and expertise to deliver effective sustainable land management as well as responding to innovative and disruptive technologies to deliver improved farm productivity. Government and the agricultural industry need to address the barriers to uptake and investment. The subsequent changes to farming practices may force change on the landscape that are undesirable or unintentional, while other may be positive.

**3.2.4 Forestry:** The concept of multi-purpose forestry underpins modern forestry policy. Recreational use of the woods remains high. Timber prices, particularly for firewood are buoyant and markets strong. This is encouraging private owners back into managing their woods and grants can assist with improving the access for increased harvesting and for producing robust management plans. However in many parts of the Wye Valley the woods remain under-managed and over-mature. Meanwhile buyers of wood products are increasingly demanding assurances about the quality and impacts of forest management. Certification is one way of providing such an assurance and much of the Wye Valley woodlands are already certified. Past activities, such as planting conifers in ancient semi-natural woodland and on heathland, is being reversed. Historically the Wye Valley woodlands were managed for woodfuel in the form of charcoal. The development of modern woodfuel markets could increase the management of these woods once more. However this will need larger access tracks for modern machinery. These changes would revert the continuous even-aged forest canopy to which people have become accustomed over recent years, to a more dynamic patchwork of different-aged coppiced coups and stands of maturing trees for timber and wildlife with ancient and veteran trees managed sympathetically throughout. The overall connectivity of woodlands in the valley mean the wildlife habitats are fairly robust. However there are significant threats to a variety of tree species by an increasing array of pests and diseases, which are having a dramatic impact on both the landscape and the viability of some forestry practices. In particular, Chalara / Ash Dieback is affecting the majority of Ash trees in the area and the loss of significant numbers of trees is inevitable. The diversity of the Wye Valley woodlands means the forest cover will continue but other species including Sycamore will replace the Ash, changing the nature of the woodlands. Meanwhile Phytophthora ramorum has significantly affected larch plantations with clear felling of larch trees in the Wye Valley.

**3.2.5 Transport:** Private vehicle and HGV use remains the dominant form of transport, although cycling is increasing in the lower Wye Valley. The increase in electric cars is unlikely to affect this trend especially with declining public transport services. Incremental changes in transport infrastructure can erode local distinctiveness and natural beauty and mar the landscape character. For example; concrete curbing is installed to prevent increased erosion of verges; signs proliferate to direct and inform the driver, and these are bigger and brighter to gain attention. In Wales bi-lingual signs are even larger. Street lighting has also increased so that main junctions are fully lit and what were once quiet obscure rural crossroads may now have a mini-roundabout and a dozen street lamps. Sustainable transport options are required which avoid these pitfalls.

**3.2.6 Tourism and Recreation:** Visitors support an important part of the local economy, being one of the largest sectors of employment in the AONB. But managing the flow of visitors, particularly in the peaks and troughs (often weather dependent), is a challenge along with maintaining appropriate staffing levels to service this variable demand, thus very reliant on part-time local labour. Over-tourism, according to Responsible Travel, occurs when there are too many visitors to a particular destination. Of course defining ‘too many’ is subjective, but if narrow roads are jammed with tourist vehicles, when wildlife is scared away, when tourists cannot view landmarks because of the crowds, when fragile environments are degraded, that is over-tourism. The investment generated by tourism can help to sustain aspects of the local environment. However the trend for late booking and discounting is reducing the profitability for many businesses, particularly the small family-run businesses typical of the Wye Valley. This is exacerbated by rising costs. When visitors spend less or expect more for less money, it is often the food and drink industry which is hardest hit. This part of the industry can be an integral part of supporting local production and landscape conservation. Visitors also bring pressures on the local infrastructure, such as facilities, roads and trails, with modifications required to accommodate their needs or mitigate against the impacts.

**3.2.7 Development pressures:** The UK population will continue to grow, and its demands and expectations continue to evolve. This is likely to increase pressures on ecosystem services, exacerbated by climate change impacts. As more people require more houses in which to live, many wishing to live in the countryside while working in neighbouring towns and cities, there is accompanying growth in road traffic. This all has an effect on the tranquillity and undeveloped nature of the area. Conversely, some people may perceive the AONB designation itself as a threat to the modern aspirations and lifestyles of the area’s residents and businesses. Expansion of the market towns adjacent to the AONB can alleviate the pressure for development in the AONB but the associated growth in traffic can still have significant implications for the area. A robust Green Infrastructure approach when considering development allows the holistic consideration of a wide range of aspects which can contribute positively to ecosystem services and the AONB.

**3.2.8 Quality of life:** As the demographics of the population in the AONB evolve so the requirements of local communities change. This has already led to the loss of local services including the closure of many village shops and rural pubs. Agriculture and forestry remain the dominant land uses but less and less people in the countryside have any connection to the growing or processing of local produce. Most of our rural landscapes are oddly quiet now as they are increasingly occupied by people who do not work in the villages and who are not there during the day. For those left behind, such as car-less parents, young people and the elderly, the ‘peace and tranquillity of the countryside’, that contributes so much to some peoples’ quality of life, can become a key feature of social isolation emphasising the emptiness and silence of their situation. If we do not want our settlements to be soulless dormitories or week-end resorts we must find ways to sustain, recover or improve the core quality, and affordability, of life for people living and working in the Wye Valley AONB. It is also important to ensure that the quality of life that visitors to the Wye Valley experience here is good too.

### 3.3 Changes since designation

3.3.1 The Wye Valley was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1971. The published designation history gives an outline of the key features and reasons for designating the lower Wye Valley as an AONB. However there is not much consistent baseline information from which to measure what changes have occurred in the landscape over the fifty years since the Wye Valley was designated.

3.3.2 A comparison of habitat surveys from the early 1970s and 2010-13 over a 10% parcel of the AONB, the Gloucestershire part north of St Briavels, provide a useful insight into changes since designation. The comparison analysis is ongoing but interim results report the following:-

“There are several striking differences between the two surveys. The proportion of broadleaved or mixed woodland, as opposed to solid conifers, has increased considerably, whilst unimproved grasslands and orchards have almost disappeared from the map in most areas. Smaller habitat features such as scrub and bracken patches, small ponds and strips of new planting (including a couple of new orchard patches) have increased:

Deciduous woodland:	+59%
Coniferous woodland:	-43%
Mixed woodland:	+18%
Scrub:	+23%
Improved grass – species-poor:	+6%
Unimproved grass and species-rich semi-improved:	-41%
Orchards:	-87%
Open water:	+140%

“Despite the apparent timelessness of the Wye Valley landscape, there have been big changes since the 1970s. Potential drivers for these changes include:

1. Changes in farming subsidies, leading to abandonment or diversification away from extensive pasture, especially in the more hilly areas;
2. Removal of orchards during the 1970s may also have been encouraged by grants, including grants for farm improvements which required “spare” land near to existing farm buildings;
3. A change in forestry policy leading to replanting of conifer plantations with more diverse mixtures of trees. Outside of the Forestry Commission land some felled areas appear to have been converted to other uses or allowed to grow into scrub;
4. More use of grassland improvement appears to have led to most “unimproved” grasslands either being improved, or allowed to develop bracken or scrub. Some “improved” fields have now developed some species-diversity, however, possibly due to organic farming or the use of minimal improvement on acid grassland, which can lead to increased floral diversity.”

Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER) 2013.

3.3.3 The following summarises further notable changes that have impacted on the AONB since designation in 1971:-

- The A40 dual carriageway had been constructed by 1971 but subsequent development along the roadside has continued to impact on the natural beauty of the area.

- Most major industry had ceased in the valley by 1971, but development of redundant sites has not always been sympathetic to the heritage or natural beauty of the valley.
- The railway line, closed by 1971, has overgrown significantly providing a tree line where before was a managed transport corridor.
- Agricultural intensification has significantly changed the AONB in some places; field boundaries and orchards have been removed in more intensively farmed areas and much floodplain grassland has been ploughed for arable use.
- Recently there has been a resurgence in cider production and consequently more orchards have been planted, albeit with bush varieties rather than standard trees.
- The mixture of gardens, rough ground, churchyard, semi-natural grassland, scattered trees and walls that characterises [many of] the village[s] provides far greater habitat variety than the commercial farmland nearby (Peterken 2008)
- The number of farmers and people employed in farming has declined steeply.
- Most quarries in the AONB have closed, but the last remaining large quarries in or adjacent to the AONB are still working extensions.
- Many more people work from dedicated home offices. In some parts of the AONB this amounts to about 10% of the resident workforce, equivalent to over 3 home offices per square km.
- The dramatic decline in salmon stocks in the river is slowly recovering although numbers remain low.
- The planting of conifers in ancient woodland sites has significantly reduced in response to higher grants for broadleaves and several areas of heathland have been restored.
- Significant increases in deer numbers (and species) are putting unsustainable pressure on woodlands.
- The unauthorised release of boar/feral pigs into the Forest of Dean is changing the character and public perception of some woodland.
- Visitor numbers to the area appear to have declined from highs in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but are increasing again.
- Increasing recreational activity and individual car use continues to exert pressure on honey-pot sites such as Tintern and Symonds Yat.
- Canoeing on the river has increased.
- Housing and development pressure has increased, to the detriment of the stock of affordable housing.
- Many villages and rural areas have lost their shops, pubs and petrol stations, although new community initiatives have re-opened some village shops.

#### **4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PLAN**

The guiding principles that underpin the approach to managing the AONB are sustainable development, natural resource management, the ecosystem approach and the landscape approach.



## 4.1 Sustainable development

4.1.1 The concept of ‘sustainable development’ is based on the definition from the World Commission on Environment and Development’s 1987 Brundtland Report as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The UK government is committed to the delivery of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agreed in 2015 at the United Nations. The SDGs are underpinned by the principle of universality. This means that all nations, and all people, are responsible for their achievement both internationally and domestically. Delivering the SDGs sets us on a trajectory to end poverty and inequality, improve health and wellbeing, end the devastating decline of biodiversity and ecosystems, and reduce the impacts of climate change. They offer a route to a better, more sustainable and just, future. However, governments alone cannot deliver the Goals. Partnership and multi-stakeholder participation is also essential. Collaboration is critical as we cannot neglect the challenges we face domestically nor ignore the reliance and impact our way of life has on the rest of the world.

4.1.2 A move to managing sustainability will require an appropriate mixture of regulations, technology, financial investment and education, as well as changes in individual and societal behaviour and adoption of a more integrated, rather than conventional sectorial, approach to ecosystem management.

4.1.3 In Wales, the overarching sustainable development context is enshrined through the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Act. The Environment Act, which integrates the management of natural resources into the WFG Act’s sustainable development architecture – the seven well-being goals, introduced a further set of principles – the 5 ways of working, which apply to the management of Wales’ natural resources. In this way, a two-tier policy architecture exists which is not only aligned closely with the EU’s architecture, but is also aligned to the international level, in particular, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity’s ecosystem approach.

4.1.4 Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR) ensures that the most is made in Wales of the opportunities that Wales' natural resources provide. This respects the limits of natural processes that continue to be our life support system. The overall aim is to ensure that Wales has increasingly resilient and diverse ecosystems that deliver economic, environmental and social benefits. Four objectives for SMNR are:

1. Stocks of natural resources are safeguarded and enhanced
2. Ecosystems are resilient to expected and unforeseen change
3. Contributing to a circular economy with more efficient use of natural resources
4. Wales has healthy places for people, protected from environmental risks

In both England and Wales natural resource management is particularly evident through river catchment management.

4.1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for England has a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”. However this does not automatically apply in AONBs because (under NPPF paragraph 11 footnote 6) there

are other specific policies in the NPPF that protect AONBs (paragraph 172) which provide a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the area. A 2019 High Court case in Haslemere (Surrey Hills AONB) confirmed that the impact of any development on an AONB can provide a reason for refusal that disengages the ‘tilted balance’ of NPPF 11 d (ii). This is effectively the same as excluding it from the presumption in favour of development as it means that the decision-maker can weigh up the harm to the AONB (giving it great weight as required under para 172) against the potential benefits without having to apply a weighting in favour of permission. This does not constitute a favour against sustainable development in AONBs and indeed reinforces that change (i.e. development) will occur in many aspects of life and the environment but that where change does occur it must be managed in a manner which contributes to a better quality of life for current and future generations, without undermining the quality of the natural environment. Therefore sustainable management means a future Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which continues to justify its designation as a nationally important area of highly valued functioning landscape with distinctive features and Special Qualities, which is also a living, working area, with vibrant communities where people want to live and work and visit and where they will continue to want to do so.

## **4.2 Natural Capital**

4.2.1 The benefits we derive from the natural world are critically important to human well-being. The Management Plan adopts the ‘Ecosystem Approach’, being a central principle in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 2004). This focuses on the holistic and integrated management of land, water and living resources to promote conservation and sustainable use and the three objectives of the Convention:

- Conservation of biological and geological diversity;
- Sustainable use of its components;
- Fair and Equitable Sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

4.2.2 The ecosystem approach provides a mechanism which can be used to look at whole ecosystems during the decision making process, and for valuing the ecosystem services they provide, ensuring that society can maintain a healthy and resilient natural environment for current and future generations. In the context of sustainable development, decisions need to be made within environmental limits and at an appropriate spatial scale, whilst recognising the cumulative impacts of decisions. River catchments are recognised as an appropriate scale for this, including the Wye catchment, as are woodland connectivity and hedgerow networks.

4.2.3 Natural capital refers to both the living (e.g. fish stocks, forests) and non-living (e.g. minerals, energy resources) aspects of nature which produce value to people, both directly and indirectly. It is this capital that underpins all other capital in our economy and society. Essentially, natural capital is about nature’s assets. From these assets we derive a flow of benefits known as ecosystem services. A monetary value can be placed on some elements of the natural system, using the concept of division of assets and flows. For instance, the ‘Marches Ecosystem Assessment: An Assessment of the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services Value in Herefordshire,

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin’ was published in 2016 by Shropshire Council on behalf of the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Partnership. This included Annualised and Capitalised Baseline Value of Assessed Ecosystem Services in each of the 3 counties in The Marches (Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin). The Wye Valley AONB cover 7% of Herefordshire which accounts for 46% of the AONB. Therefore some analysis and extrapolations can be made from the Herefordshire data. While the accuracy of these calculations can be disputed, they help to underline the importance of an ecosystem asset (‘stock’) to society. However, it is critical in undertaking any valuation exercise that intrinsic and incalculable value delivered by ecosystem and cultural assets are recognised. A balanced approach to natural beauty and its conservation and enhancement cannot be fully economically valued, so cannot be fairly weighed against developments which would destroy or damage those ecosystem stocks in simple economic terms.

4.2.4 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it encourages developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected. The intention is that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.

### 4.3 Ecosystem services

4.3.1 Ecosystem services are the services provided by nature that benefit people. The environment is our life support system, important for its intrinsic value, as well as providing water, producing our food, energy and timber, sustaining our wildlife and creating employment and income worth billions of pounds (TEEB, 2010). Ecosystem Services (ESs) are the multiple benefits humans obtain either directly or indirectly from these ecological systems and include services pertaining to food provision, carbon sequestration, water regulation and many others, all of which are essential for human well-being (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA), 2005; Troy & Wilson, 2006). The MEA categorised ecosystem services into four broad categories (Table 1).

**Table 1: Ecosystem Services (MEA, 2005)**

<b>Service Categories</b>	<b>Examples of specific services</b>
Provisioning	Food, fibre, fuel, bio-materials and clean water.
Regulating	Climate regulation, carbon sequestration, flood protection, pollination, air/soil/water quality
Cultural	Education, cultural heritage, sense of place, health, recreation, tourism and aesthetic value
Supporting	Soil formation, nutrient cycling, water cycling and primary production

4.3.2 Ecosystem services are part of the wider integrated ecosystem approach which also includes the other key elements of involving people and valuing the natural environment in decision making. The UK's existing ecosystems are the product of continuous interactions between people and their surrounding environments, driven by societal changes e.g. demographic, economic, socio-political, technological and behavioural. The historic environment itself is also an environmental resource that confers physical as well as more intangible ecosystem services. Therefore an ecosystem approach is more than managing the environment as an integrated system; it involves managing societal and economic drivers as part of this system. This is fundamental to achieving sustainable development. A fully functioning landscape should continue to provide these services; therefore it also correlates closely with landscape scale management and the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR).

4.3.3 However, while the ecosystem services and SMNR frameworks are useful means of assessing the benefits that the AONB provides to people, these need to be examined in conjunction with the primary purpose of AONBs which is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. This should help to secure ecosystem services, but these are an additional benefit of AONB designation. The intrinsic value of natural beauty therefore needs to be recognised alongside the ecosystem services approach. These sets of values are important, distinct and complementary.

4.3.4 A study of the main Ecosystems Services in the Wye Valley AONB was carried out (Parrett, 2011). This identified the Broad Habitat Types in the Wye Valley AONB (see Table 4.) with Enclosed Farmland and Woodland accounting for nearly 88% of the land area combined.

## **4.4 Landscape approach**

4.4.1 The landscape of the Wye Valley is the result of millions of years of natural evolutionary and climatic processes and thousands of years of human settlement and use. It is a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, ecological, geological and geomorphological features.

4.4.2 The landscape approach as it relates to conservation, agriculture and other land uses seeks to address the increasingly complex and widespread environmental, social and political challenges that transcend traditional management boundaries. The landscape approach helps to bring together the disciplines associated with the humanities, and social and natural science in a way that creates policy useful to not only help deliver environmental outcomes but for the delivery of important social and economic objectives. To do this we have to really understand that meeting ground between people and place; the intended and unintended ways we interact with the environment upon which we depend as a species. This means not just viewing traditional policy areas at a landscape scale but seeing landscape as a framework where the skills and assets of people and the social and economic processes that drive them are fundamentally and intrinsically interconnected with nature and the physical environment.

4.4.3 The landscape approach and an understanding of landscape character guide the AONB Partnership’s work. This fits well with the ecosystems approach and SMNR as these all encourage consideration of the links between various elements of the landscape in their management. The interaction between natural and cultural forces and the influence of our demand for goods and services impacts on the way we manage our natural resources. These activities in a landscape, particularly a Protected Landscape, should take account of the impacts they may have on the capacity of the landscape to maintain the ecosystem services. For example, the decisions that land managers take determine, to a great extent, whether society’s ambitions for water, wildlife, healthy soil and food production can be achieved. The extensive nature of the Wye Valley AONB can help secure the sustainable management of healthy, resilient and productive ecosystems.

4.4.4 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) promotes the protection, planning and management of landscapes and reinforces the approach to landscape character assessment. In line with the Convention and the principles of sustainable development, this Management Plan uses an understanding of landscape character to help guide local activity and ensure that planning decisions and management practices conserve and enhance the distinct character and Special Qualities of the AONB’s landscapes.

4.4.5 Conservation and enhancement of the character and quality of the AONB landscape lies at the heart of this Management Plan. There are four landscape management strategies:

**Conserve** - for landscapes in good condition with strong character where the emphasis is on protecting the key characteristics of the area.

**Enhance** - for landscapes where some features have fallen into decline. Management should aim to reintroduce features, improve their management and remove features that detract from the overall character.

**Restore** - for landscapes where features have been lost or are in a severe state of decline. Management should aim to repair and re-establish characteristic features.

**Create** - for landscapes where condition is poor and character weak beyond repair. Management should consider creation of a new landscape.

4.4.6 In taking forward these approaches, AONB management tends to focus on large or ‘landscape scale’ initiatives. However they are equally applicable to small sites. Landscape scale initiatives also tend to be integrated to include many different interests, often relying on collaborations and partnerships to be truly effective. Sharing management experience beyond the AONB boundary, into the surrounding catchment and/or beyond, is also encouraged where resources allow.

4.4.7 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 both recognise the importance of taking a landscape-scale scope and working through an ecosystem services approach to recognise the multiple values that landscapes provide for nature and natural processes and people and their well-being. Welsh Government’s Natural Resources Policy (2018) recognises that “Landscapes are a vital part of both place-based and nature-based approaches. All places have distinctive qualities, opportunities and functions which will be reflected by NRW in developing Area Statements.”

## **4.5 The setting of the AONB**

4.5.1 The AONB is not an isolated landscape. It is connected to the surrounding landscapes, towns and countryside, ecologically, economically, socially and through the action of natural processes such as hydrology and geomorphology. Development and other activities within the setting of the AONB may have an impact on some or all these processes. The extent of the setting will vary depending upon the issues considered but some can be mapped, for example, the impact of development on views into and out of the AONB.

4.5.2 Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in the AONB. Both Planning Practice Guidance (Natural Environment: 003) in England and Planning Policy Wales (Edition 10. para 6.3.5) emphasise that this duty is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside of the AONB boundary, but which might have an impact on the setting of the AONB.

4.5.3 Not all activities outside the AONB will be detrimental; for example, conservation practices, such as connecting habitats, and economic ties, such as processing or markets for local produce, may have beneficial impacts that support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty.

## **5. MANAGEMENT OF THE WYE VALLEY AONB**

### **5.1 AONBs in the Wider World**

5.1.1 There are more than 100,000 protected areas worldwide. Each contributes in its own way to sustaining life on Earth, including providing a wide range of benefits to people and the environment. These may embrace protection of biodiversity, soil and land productivity; climate regulation; local culture and identity; recreation and well-being. Collectively protected areas cover 15% of the earth's land surface and inland waters, and just above 7% of the global oceans. The 2018 Protected Planet Report, by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), states that "the conservation of biodiversity in protected and conserved areas provides the foundation for achieving the whole suite of Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, the ecosystem services of the world's protected areas underpin global needs to address climate change; protect water sources and food production systems; alleviate disaster risk; and maintain health, well-being and the livelihoods of millions of people." However, the report notes that there is still insufficient protection of areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services. But connectivity between protected areas is key to maintaining the viability of populations and ecosystems and Protected areas that are effectively managed generally lead to improved biodiversity outcomes.

5.1.2 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are part of a family of nationally designated protected landscapes in the UK, which include the AONBs of



England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the National Parks of England, Scotland and Wales and the National Scenic Areas of Scotland. Together they cover nearly 5 million hectares or 20% of the UK land area. Their future relies on sustaining people's relationship to the land and its resources.

## 5.2 International protected area policy

5.2.1 Protected areas remain the fundamental building blocks of virtually all national and international conservation strategies supported by governments and international institutions such as the **Convention on Biological Diversity**. They provide the core of efforts to protect the world's threatened species and habitats and are increasingly recognised as essential for addressing biodiversity loss, the provision of ecosystem services, biological resources and climate change mitigation strategies.

5.2.2 AONBs are recognised as **Category V Protected Landscapes** under IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature) global protected area framework. A Category V Protected Landscape is "*a protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values*". They offer a unique contribution to the conservation of biological diversity particularly where conservation objectives need to be met over a large area with a range of ownership patterns and governance; acting as models of sustainability and promoting traditional systems of management that support particular species. IUCN has also published global standards for nature-based solutions.

5.2.3 The importance of all landscapes is recognised by the **European Landscape Convention** (ELC), ratified by the UK government in 2006. Article 1 defines 'landscape' as "*an area perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors*". General measures include:-

- Recognition of landscapes in law as an essential component of people's shared heritage;
- Implementation of landscape policies aimed at landscape protection;
- Procedures established for participation of the general public and local authorities in landscape protection;
- Landscape integrated into planning and other policies.
- A range of other measures on identification and assessment of landscape; raising awareness and European cooperation

5.2.4 UK government policy reflects these aspirations through an implementation strategy drawn up for DEFRA by Natural England (NE) and Historic England. Welsh Government also notes "The Convention recognises the importance of all landscapes but also supports international systems of planning, management, conservation and protection for nationally important landscapes."

5.2.5 The **Europarc Federation** is the main NGO representing the protected areas of Europe, uniting national parks, regional parks, nature parks and biosphere reserves in 35 countries, with the common aim of protecting Europe's unique variety of

wildlife, habitats and landscapes. EUROPARC has around 400 member organisations from hundreds of protected areas. It provides a forum to share professional experience, collaborate on technical projects and progress common aims, across the field of natural, cultural and landscape protection.

### 5.2.6 **Brexit**

This plan was prepared as negotiations continued to remove the UK from the European Union (EU) and establish a new trading relationship with it. This has significant implications for the UK's rural areas and their management, particularly regarding:

- Investment in agriculture, fisheries, the environment and rural communities to replace those arising from Common Agricultural Policy. These are partially addressed in an Agriculture Act 2020.
- National legislation for environmental protection to replace those agreed at EU level, to come in an Environment Bill.
- Agreements for international trade with the EU and beyond, and the potential for future cross-Channel co-operation.

At the time of writing, it is impossible to predict where the threats and opportunities lie with any precision. The situation will clarify over the coming months as the withdrawal from the EU takes effect.

5.2.7 There have been **Reviews of Designated Landscapes** (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) in both England and Wales. The Marsden Review in Wales was published in 2015 with subsequent iterations resulting in 'Valued and Resilient: The Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks' published in July 2018. In England the Landscapes or Glover Review, launched as part of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, was published in September 2019 with 27 'Proposals' for Government. These included that AONBs should be strengthened, with increased funding, governance reform, new shared purposes with National Parks, and a greater voice on development. The Review argued that our national landscapes are "England's soul and we should care for them as such" and that much more must be done for nature and natural beauty and welcoming people as landscapes for all. There were also references to future designation of the Forest of Dean and also stakeholder proposals for the Herefordshire Marches.

## 5.3 **AONB Family and network**

5.3.1 The **National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (NAAONB) was established in 1998 as an independent organisation to act on behalf of AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and represent those involved in the planning and management of 8000 square miles of the UK's finest landscapes. In 2015 the NAAONB became a registered charity. Its vision is that the natural beauty of AONBs is valued and secure, with the mission to support and develop a network of ambitious AONB partnerships with a strong collective voice.

5.3.2 The charity has three objects:

- a. to promote the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty including the physical, natural, cultural and built environment in and around Areas of Outstanding

Natural Beauty, other protected areas, and those areas for which such designation might be pursued,

b. to advance the education, understanding and appreciation of the public in relation to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty including the physical, natural, cultural and built environment of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), other protected areas and those areas for which such designation might be pursued, and

c. to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those organisations promoting or representing Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, other protected areas and those areas for which such designation might be pursued.

The charity pursues this by

- Demonstrating the value and relevance of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Advocating for the AONB designation, AONB partnerships and Conservation Boards
- Supporting behavioural change and collaboration.
- Providing expertise and insight into the management of these nationally important landscapes.

5.3.3 The Wye Valley AONB Partnership, is a member of the NAAONB and has a long and involved history. The first Wye Valley AONB Officer, Dr Ruth Williams, was instrumental in establishing an AONB Staff Forum and the original Association of AONBs, along with the then JAC Chairman Cllr Bart Venner MBE, who became the Association's first chairperson. The merger of the two groups created the NAAONB which was subsequently chaired by JAC chairman Ashley Thomas, between 2007-2010.

5.3.4 The Wye Valley AONB Partnership is also actively engaged in collaborations with Designated Landscapes in Wales, the West Midlands and South West England including developing and delivering joint projects and initiatives with neighbouring AONBs and National Parks.

5.3.5 The existence of these national and international networks provides the opportunity to share good practice with other Protected Landscapes around the experience of looking after these special areas.

## **5.4 Responsibility for the AONB**

5.4.1 Most of the Wye Valley AONB is in private ownership. Therefore much of the responsibility for the conservation and enhancement of the AONB rest with the residents, landowners and land managers, be they farmers or gardeners. Similarly the many visitors to the AONB should have a responsibility to care for the outstanding landscape they have chosen to spend some of their time (and probably money) in. The Government has designated the Wye Valley as an AONB because it recognises that it is in the public interest to protect such an important area for current and future generations.

5.4.2 Administratively the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is very complex, being the only protected landscape to straddle the English Welsh border. It lies in the three counties of Herefordshire (45.5%), Monmouthshire

(36%) and Gloucestershire (18.5%), each in a different region; the Midlands, Wales and the South West of England respectively. However, the cross-border nature of the AONB does also present a strength in the range and experience that the various partners are able to bring to the management of this internationally important landscape designation.

5.4.3 All **public bodies have a ‘duty of regard’** to the purpose of AONBs, under the Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000. This applies to government and relevant authorities, including local planning authorities, parish, town and community councils and the holders of public office.

5.4.4 **Central Government** responsibility for AONBs remains substantial. This comes through the provision of legislation and the policy statements whereby the purposes of the designation can be met. From Whitehall and the Welsh Government there is also direct involvement, guidance and funding through departmental and agency functions delivered, for example by Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, Forestry England and the Rural Payments Agency.

5.4.5 The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 sets out the procedure for future designation (by Natural England or Natural Resources Wales) and incorporates significant measures designed to address increased pressures on protected landscapes that had rendered the provisions of the 1949 Act inadequate.

5.4.6 Government policy reaffirms the special treatment for AONBs in other major policy areas: the significance of AONBs in the context of land use planning is considered in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2018) and Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 10); the 25 Year Environment Plan recognises the role designated landscapes play in reconnecting people with nature and the contribution they can make to a coherent and resilient ecological network requiring more and bigger sites that are better managed and joined up. Other public bodies such as Cadw, Historic England, the Forestry Commission and Forestry England, Visit England and Visit Wales focus their activities through protected landscape strategies or joint accords to ensure their work reflects the distinctive nature of each AONB and helps deliver the priorities identified in AONB management plans.

5.4.7 Natural England (NE) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) retain a role in delivering protected landscapes policy and the statutory role in respect of AONBs including powers to designate AONBs and vary their boundaries. NE and NRW are the respective government’s statutory consultees on nationally significant infrastructure projects.

5.4.8 The Water Framework Directive (WFD) Regulations in England & Wales place a duty on public bodies to have regard to River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). The aim of the Directive is to safeguard and improve water quality. It will do this through the RBMPs which develop the links between surface and groundwater, and water quantity and water quality. The Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are the lead agencies for ensuring that the Directive is implemented. The River Wye Catchment and the Wye Valley AONB come within the Severn River Basin District. The Wye Catchment Partnership was

established in 2014 with support from Defra and the Welsh Government to bring the farmers, foresters, planners, charities, statutory bodies and people who have an interest in the Wye together to secure better outcomes for the Wye catchment and the environment we rely on. The partnership is hosted by NRW and the Wye and Usk Foundation.

5.4.9 The **local planning authorities**, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council, are central to achieving the purposes of the AONB designation. They deal with all planning issues in the AONB and other local authority functions, such as Public Rights of Way, highways, countryside services, tourism, public transport, etc. Their responsibility was reaffirmed in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, section 84.4, by which they are empowered to “take all such action as appears to them expedient for the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB”. Part of the way they achieve this is by acting jointly through their support for the Joint Advisory Committee.

5.4.10 The **‘Duty to Co-operate’** applies to all local planning authorities in England and to a number of other public bodies, under Section 110 of the Localism Act. The Duty

- Relates to sustainable development or use of land that would have a significant impact on at least two local planning areas or on a planning matter that falls within the remit of a county council,
- Requires that councils set out planning policies to address such issues,
- Requires that councils and public bodies ‘engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis’ to develop strategic policies,
- Requires councils to consider joint approaches to plan making.

The ‘Duty to Co-operate’ also covers a number of public bodies including the Civil Aviation Authority, Historic England, Environment Agency, Highways Agency, Highway Authorities, Homes and Communities Agency, Integrated Transport Authorities, Natural England and Primary Care Trusts.

5.4.12 **Local communities**, including all people that live and work in the AONB, can play an active role in caring for the Wye Valley AONB. This Management Plan identifies some of the priorities for action and ways to get involved, including the Charter in section 12.2. This Plan can also aid community planning, by helping to inform Neighbourhood Development Plans and community strategies. This will also help local Town, Parish & Community Councils fulfil their Section 85 ‘duty of regard’.

## 5.5 Management and Governance of the Wye Valley AONB

5.5.1 A **Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)** has overseen the Wye Valley AONB since 1972. Unlike a National Park Authority, the JAC is not a planning authority or an executive body. The role of the JAC is one of advising and guiding the statutory authorities regarding particular issues within the AONB. The constitution and membership of the JAC reflects the trans-national and trans-regional nature of the AONB (see Appendix I). While the complex nature of the AONB is an administrative challenge, in practice the JAC has for many years been a strong partnership based on

the tremendous goodwill towards the Wye Valley. This committee meets formally three times per annum and hosts a late summer study tour for the wider **AONB Partnership**, which encompasses the local partner organisations involved in the AONB and occasional seminars on specific issues.

5.5.2 The JAC is supported by a Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP), which comprises representatives of the four local authorities involved, plus a range of relevant Government agencies (see Appendix I). The core costs of managing the **Wye Valley AONB Unit** are jointly funded by Defra and Natural Resources Wales grant aid with match funding contributions from the four local authorities. The AONB Unit are a small team of dedicated staff employed by the local authorities on behalf of the JAC and consist of an AONB Manager, an AONB Finance and Administration Officer, an AONB Community Links Officer, an AONB Development Officer and an AONB Information Officer with additional/occasional project staff, volunteers and trainees. The AONB Unit staff work from the AONB Office in Monmouth, which is near the geographic centre of the Wye Valley AONB. The core budget for the AONB unit is approximately £300,000 per annum, with additional funds depending on varying levels of partnership funding for specific projects and initiatives. Welsh Government also provide a Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) to the AONB Partnership which delegate allocation of community grants through an Assessment Panel.

5.5.3 The AONB Unit convenes and services a variety of **AONB Topic Groups** and project partnerships which include a wide range of relevant experts and interested partners, often not directly engaged with the JAC or TOWP. These Topic Groups work as either steering or advisory groups on specific projects and topics, or ‘task and finish’ groups for particular issues or initiatives. The membership of these groups broadens the AONB Partnership considerably.

5.5.4 The AONB’s designation, landscape assets and management structures present opportunities to positively address the challenges in the area, both those identified in this Management Plan and unanticipated ones. For example the AONB attracts resources by being a target area for agri-environment schemes, benefiting landowners, biodiversity and wider society. There are many decisions affecting the landscape over which the AONB Partnership does not have direct influence, however it seeks to improve understanding to enable better decisions to be taken. The format and nature of the AONB Partnership makes it well placed to spread information and bring people together quickly in response to environmental changes and challenges. An independent assessment by Land Use Consultants (LUC) on The Value of AONB Partnerships (July 2013) endorsed this approach.

5.5.5 Many of the principles of this Management Plan can be applied to landscapes outside the AONB boundary. Where appropriate, the Wye Valley AONB Partnership works with partners to deliver projects across a wider area than just the AONB, ensuring that the context of the AONB is recognised. Many projects also operate collaboratively with adjacent protected landscapes to make best use of available resources.

## **6. OVERVIEW OF THE AONB**

### **6.1 Introduction**

6.1.1 This section provides a description of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with its landscape features and Special Qualities and the activities and pressures affecting the AONB. A separate State of the AONB Report complements this Management Plan and sets out the current state of the Special Qualities.

### **6.2 The Landscape Character of the AONB**

6.2.1 The main elements and features that contribute to the landscape character of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) have been independently assessed in the three counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire. Herefordshire Council and Forest of Dean District Council each have Landscape Character Assessments, while Monmouthshire County Council has LANDMAP, developed under the leadership and methodology of the Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales). The former and the latter were adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in the respective councils' Unitary Development Plan and Core Strategies and Local Development Plans. The various character areas and landscape types identified by the three assessments were amalgamated into sixteen Landscape Management Zones within the AONB (see Map 2). Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has also been completed in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire, albeit to different methodologies. But the Gloucestershire methodology was extended over the whole AONB.

6.2.2 In England also National Character Areas have been profiled by Natural England. There are two that cover the Wye Valley AONB; South Herefordshire & Over Severn (no. 104) and Forest of Dean and Lower Wye (no. 105). NCA 104 covers 12,836 ha of the Wye Valley AONB (25% of the NCA) while NCA 105 contains 8,041 ha of the AONB (26% of that NCA).

6.2.3 The key features of the sixteen Wye Valley AONB Landscape Management Zones (LMZ) are outlined in Table 2 and Map 2. These are cross-referenced to the Special Qualities [SQ] of the AONB, which are detailed in Table 8, along with the ecosystem goods and services they provide. This forms the basis of the Natural Capital of the AONB and the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR).

**Table 2: Wye Valley AONB Landscape Management Zones and Features**

<b>LMZ ID</b>	<b>Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)</b>	<b>LCA ref [NCA no.]</b>	<b>Features and link to Special Qualities [SQ]</b>
LMZ01	Woolhope Dome	<p><i>HC Character Areas:</i> Woolhope Dome</p> <p><i>Landscape Types:</i> Principal Wooded Hills Wooded Hills and Farmland Principal Timbered Farmlands Principal Settled Farmlands [NCA 104]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ancient broadleaved &amp; mixed woodland [SQ2, SQ18]]</li> <li>• Varied topography [SQ9]</li> <li>• Hedgerow network often with mature trees [SQ5, SQ18]]</li> <li>• Mixed farming [SQ1]</li> <li>• Traditional orchards with locally distinctive apple &amp; pear varieties [SQ1, SQ27]</li> <li>• Streams [SQ3]</li> <li>• Irregular field patterns, often linked with semi-natural grassland [SQ4]</li> <li>• Scattered settlement pattern [SQ20]</li> <li>• Commons [SQ26]</li> <li>• Filtered and medium distance views [SQ11]</li> <li>• Grey and brown Silurian limestone soils [SQ6]</li> <li>• Sandstone at heart of dome, surrounded by concentric limestone ridges separated by clay vales [SQ6]</li> </ul>
LMZ02	Herefordshire Floodplain (Wye Meadows)	<p><i>HC Character Areas:</i> Central Herefordshire Archenfield</p> <p><i>Landscape Types:</i> Riverside Meadows Principal Settled Farmlands [NCA 104]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floodplain grassland with mature trees [SQ10, SQ18]</li> <li>• Streamside and hedgerow trees, traditionally pollarded [SQ5]</li> <li>• Ditches and wetland habitats [SQ5]</li> <li>• River bank vegetation, mud cliffs and wildlife [SQ3]</li> <li>• River channel islands, beaches and riffles [SQ3]</li> <li>• Minimal settlement [SQ20]</li> <li>• Bridges [SQ3, SQ17]</li> </ul>



LMZ ID	Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)	LCA ref [NCA no.]	Features and link to Special Qualities [SQ]
LMZ03	Sollers Hope Ridges and Valleys	<p><i>HC Character Areas:</i> Central Herefordshire Archenfield Leadon Vale</p> <p><i>Landscape Types:</i> Principal Settled Farmlands Wooded Estatelands Principal Wooded Hills Estate Farmlands [NCA 104]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedgerows with mature trees [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Mixed farming [SQ1]</li> <li>• Fragments of ancient woodland [SQ2, SQ18]</li> <li>• Varied topography [SQ1]</li> <li>• Medium to long distance views [SQ11]</li> <li>• Clustered settlement pattern [SQ20]</li> <li>• Parkland [SQ19]</li> <li>• Narrow lanes with hedges and hedgebanks [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Remnants of traditional orchards [SQ1, SQ27]</li> <li>• Red soils of Devonian Old Red Sandstone [SQ7]</li> </ul>
LMZ04	Hentland Ridges and Valleys	<p><i>HC Character Areas:</i> Archenfield</p> <p><i>Landscape Types:</i> Principal Settled Farmlands Timbered Plateau Farmland Principal Timbered Farmland Sandstone Farmlands Wooded Estatelands [NCA 104]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedgerows with mature trees [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Mixed farming [SQ1]</li> <li>• Fragments of ancient woodland [SQ2, SQ18]</li> <li>• Varied topography [SQ1]</li> <li>• Filtered medium distance views [SQ11]</li> <li>• Clustered settlement pattern [SQ20]</li> <li>• Estate parkland [SQ19]</li> <li>• Narrow lanes with hedges and hedgebanks [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Red soils of Devonian Old Red Sandstone [SQ7]</li> </ul>
LMZ05	Kings Caple Lowlands	<p><i>HC Character Areas:</i> Archenfield</p> <p><i>Landscape Types:</i> Principal Settled Farmlands Principal Wooded Hills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedgerows define field boundaries [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Arable, horticultural and mixed farming [SQ1, SQ27]</li> <li>• Open aspects with medium distance views [SQ11]</li> <li>• Steep northern wooded slope to river [SQ2, SQ18]</li> <li>• Red soils of Devonian Old Red Sandstone [SQ7]</li> </ul>

<b>LMZ ID</b>	<b>Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)</b>	<b>LCA ref [NCA no.]</b>	<b>Features and link to Special Qualities [SQ]</b>
		[NCA 104]	
LMZ06	Archenfield Lowlands	<i>HC Character Areas:</i> Archenfield <i>Landscape Types:</i> Principal Settled Farmlands Sandstone Farmlands [NCA 104]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedgerows define field boundaries [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Arable, mixed farming and orchards [SQ1, SQ27]</li> <li>• Medium distance views [SQ11]</li> <li>• Clustered settlement pattern [SQ20]</li> <li>• A40 cluster of light industrial use</li> <li>• Red soils of Devonian Old Red Sandstone [SQ7]</li> </ul>
LMZ07	Ross-on-Wye	<i>HC Character Areas:</i> Archenfield <i>Landscape Types:</i> Urban [NCA 104]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinctive Spire and skyline [SQ11]</li> <li>• Devonian Old Red Sandstone buildings and cliffs [SQ7]</li> <li>• Mix of stone and rendered buildings on escarpment overlooking river [SQ20]</li> <li>• Cultural association with Wye Tour and Picturesque Movement [SQ11]</li> </ul>
LMZ08	Walford Lowlands	<i>HC Character Areas:</i> Archenfield <i>Landscape Types:</i> Principal Settled Farmlands [NCA 104]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hedgerows define field boundaries [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Arable and horticultural farming [SQ1, SQ27]</li> <li>• Open aspects with medium distance views [SQ11]</li> <li>• Estate parkland [SQ18, SQ19]</li> <li>• Linear settlement pattern [SQ20]</li> <li>• Red soils of Devonian Old Red Sandstone [SQ7]</li> </ul>
LMZ09	Wye Gorge	<i>HC Character Areas:</i> Archenfield Forest of Dean <i>Landscape Types:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ancient, semi-natural and mixed broadleaved &amp; coniferous woodland [SQ2, SQ18]</li> <li>• Ancient and extensive tree cover pattern and skyline [SQ2, SQ11, SQ18]</li> </ul>

LMZ ID	Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)	LCA ref [NCA no.]	Features and link to Special Qualities [SQ]
		Principal Wooded Hills Wooded Hills and Farmland Principal Settled Farmlands Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings Unenclosed Commons <i>Forest of Dean Character Areas:</i> The Wye Valley - Common Grove to The Slaughter The Wye Valley - Redbrook to Brockweir The Wye Valley - Brockweir to Tutshill Monmouthshire Landscape Character Area: The Wye Valley [NCA 105]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steeply sloping topography [SQ1, SQ11]</li> <li>• Tributaries and cascades [SQ3]</li> <li>• Dramatic limestone cliffs [SQ9, SQ11]</li> <li>• Quartz conglomerate outcrops [SQ8]</li> <li>• Narrow floodplain pastures on the valley floor [SQ4]</li> <li>• Hedgerow network often with mature trees [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Mixed farming [SQ1]</li> <li>• Linear settlements bordering valley floor often at bridging points [SQ20]</li> <li>• Small clusters of historic squatter settlements on valley sides surrounded by intricate pattern of small fields, drystone walls, narrow lanes and small deciduous woodlands [SQ4, SQ5, SQ20, SQ22]</li> <li>• Predominantly unwooded Coppett Hill Common [SQ26]</li> <li>• Long panoramic views from high vantage points and medium ‘picturesque’ views from valley floor [SQ11]</li> <li>• Long history as an important route way and boundary feature, including Offa’s Dyke. [SQ14, SQ15, SQ17, SQ23]</li> <li>• Rich heritage of local natural resource transport and exploitation [SQ16, SQ17, SQ22]</li> <li>• Ancient meanders preserved as the course of tributary streams [SQ3, SQ10]</li> <li>• Woodlands and riverine habitats of high ecological and scenic value [SQ2, SQ3, SQ4, SQ5]</li> <li>• Tintern Abbey [SQ15]</li> <li>• Cultural association with Wye Tour and Picturesque Movement [SQ11]</li> <li>• Strong sense of place due to distinctive landform, woodland and river</li> </ul>

LMZ ID	Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)	LCA ref [NCA no.]	Features and link to Special Qualities [SQ]
			[SQ12, SQ18]
LMZ10	Dean Edge Limestone Hills	<i>Forest of Dean Character Areas:</i> Bicknor Hills High Meadow Woods and Staunton Coleford and Christchurch Newland Hills [NCA 105]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rolling landscape of interlocking convex hills and dry valleys formed from Carboniferous Limestone and Coal Measures [SQ8, SQ9]</li> <li>• Large areas of mixed and coniferous woodland [SQ2, SQ18]</li> <li>• Generally poor soils and hilly landform well suited to pasture [SQ4]</li> <li>• Fields defined by well-maintained hedgerows with hedgerow trees and copses on steeper slopes [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Small villages are well integrated with their surroundings [SQ20]</li> <li>• Scowles and other remnants of mining activity [SQ13, SQ14, SQ16]</li> <li>• Medium and long distance views [SQ11]</li> </ul>
LMZ11	River Trothy Convergence	<i>Monmouthshire Landscape Character Area:</i> River Trothy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flat valley floor convergence of the rivers Monnow, Wye and Trothy [SQ3, SQ10]</li> <li>• Lines of alder and willow enclose river banks [SQ5]</li> <li>• Little settlement [SQ20]</li> <li>• Arable and permanent grassland. [SQ1]</li> </ul>
LMZ12	Llangovan Foothills	<i>Monmouthshire Landscape Character Area:</i> Llangovan Foothills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large fields with mature hedgelines, hedgerow trees and individual field trees [SQ5, SQ18]</li> <li>• Limited settlement and traditional farmsteads [SQ20]</li> <li>• Long distance views [SQ11]</li> </ul>
LMZ13	Devauden Escarpment	<i>Monmouthshire Landscape Character Area:</i> Devauden Escarpment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prominent and steep escarpment [SQ1]</li> <li>• Substantial woodland cover [SQ2]</li> <li>• Mixed farming and pasture with mature hedges [SQ5]</li> </ul>

LMZ ID	Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)	LCA ref [NCA no.]	Features and link to Special Qualities [SQ]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scattered settlement and clustered villages [SQ20]</li> <li>• Long panoramic views to the north and west [SQ11]</li> </ul>
LMZ14	Trellech Sandstone Plateau	<p><i>Monmouthshire Landscape Character Areas:</i>            Chepstow Parkland            Trellech Grange            Trellech forest and commons            Tredunnock            Trellech Plateau</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High hills and ridges with inward looking basin [SQ1]</li> <li>• Flat or gently rolling plateau centred on the settlement Trellech.[SQ1]</li> <li>• Large woodland blocks of relict ancient forest and modern conifer plantations eg. Chepstow Park Wood [SQ2]</li> <li>• Mixed arable and pastoral farming [SQ1]</li> <li>• Red soils of Devonian Old Red Sandstone [SQ7]</li> <li>• Strong network of thick hedges, hedge banks, drystone walls and tree lines [SQ5]</li> <li>• Woodlands enclose fields of permanent pasture and enclaves of unimproved and semi-improved grassland [SQ4]</li> <li>• Sparse settlement outside Trellech with large farmsteads and hamlets [SQ20]</li> <li>• Estates with associated parkland [SQ19]</li> <li>• Distinctive settlement pattern related to small fields and common land [SQ4]</li> <li>• Intricate network of narrow winding lanes with remnant stone walls and mature hedges [SQ5, SQ22]</li> <li>• Springs, streams, wetland, marshland and bogs found, most notable at Cleddon bog [SQ3, SQ10]</li> <li>• Distinct sense of place from the relationship of the woodland, pasture and settlement [SQ12]</li> <li>• Evidence of early occupation, Iron Age enclosure of Gaer and medieval village of Trellech [SQ13, SQ14, SQ15]</li> </ul>

LMZ ID	Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)	LCA ref [NCA no.]	Features and link to Special Qualities [SQ]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long views and vistas across the Severn and towards the Brecon Beacons from high land [SQ11]</li> </ul>
LMZ15	Dean Edge Limestone Plateau	<i>Forest of Dean Character Areas:</i> Tidenham Chase St Briavels Common [NCA 105]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gently undulating plateau with expansive views [SQ11]</li> <li>▪ Strong field pattern of large or moderately sized arable and pasture fields [SQ1]</li> <li>▪ Distinctive stone walls and ancient hedgerows [SQ5]</li> <li>▪ Dispersed isolated farms which are located at the end of lanes and often associated with modern barn complexes [SQ20]</li> <li>▪ Villages sited at the edge of the plateau [SQ20]</li> <li>▪ Redundant Limestone quarries located across the landscape [SQ9]</li> <li>▪ Small enclosures of semi-natural, unimproved grasslands, winding lanes, small woodlands and 'squatter' cottages on St Briavels Common [SQ4, SQ5, SQ20, SQ22]</li> <li>▪ Heathland landscapes at Tidenham Chase [SQ19]</li> </ul>
LMZ16	Caerwent Limestone Plateau / Hinterlands	<i>Monmouthshire Landscape Character Area:</i> Caerwent Hinterland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gently rolling landscape with occasional narrow winding steep-sided valleys [SQ1]</li> <li>▪ Ancient, semi-natural and mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland [SQ2]</li> <li>▪ Mixture of arable and pastoral farming with traditional farmsteads and large country estates [SQ20]</li> <li>▪ Remnant parkland of large country estates [SQ19]</li> <li>▪ Long views towards the Severn Estuary are possible [SQ11]</li> <li>▪ Nucleated village of St Arvans [SQ20]</li> <li>▪ Chepstow Racecourse an important landscape at a local level [SQ19]</li> </ul>

<b>LMZ ID</b>	<b>Landscape Management Zone (LMZ)</b>	<b>LCA ref [NCA no.]</b>	<b>Features and link to Special Qualities [SQ]</b>

## 6.3 The State of the AONB Report

6.3.1 Reporting on the state of the AONB provides a baseline for determining and understanding the Special Qualities and the pressures on the AONB. The State of the AONB Report establishes a foundation for measuring change – beneficial or adverse – in the state or condition of the AONB. Therefore it forms the starting point for associated monitoring procedures, the assessment of the Natural Capital of the AONB and the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR).

6.3.2 The State of the AONB Report will be available separately and complements the following sections:

6.3.3 **Special Qualities** - These are listed in Section 2.1.9 above and Table 8 below, which identifies the Special Qualities of the AONB and their nature, quality, extent and condition. These have been cross referenced with the features of the Landscape Management Zones in Table 2 above that are crucial to the long-term well-being of the AONB.

6.3.4 **Changes or threats**-these are identified in Table 9 and represent the social, environmental and economic facets of the AONB and its communities that are significant sources of pressure for change on the Special Qualities of the AONB.

6.3.5 **Ecosystem goods and services** - these are also in Table 8 and identify the ecosystem function provided by the respective Special Qualities.

6.3.6 **Activities / Pressures** - these are highlighted under Table 9. These need to be understood in terms of their interaction, whether positive or negative, on the Special Qualities of the AONB and their occurrence in the various Landscape Management Zones. Many of the ‘changes or threats’ identified in Table 8 arise directly from these activities and pressures.

6.3.7 **Air, Soil and Water quality:** In AONB Management Plans prior to 2015 these were categorised as separate Special Qualities. However, water quality is a constituent part of SQ3 The river & tributaries. Soil quality varies across the AONB and is determined by the underlying Geological Special Qualities, SQ 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Air quality is not a unique or defining feature of the Wye Valley and is dependent on weather and occasionally temperature inversions in the Wye Gorge. The government provides guidelines and codes of good practice on the management and maintenance of air, soil and water quality. The following Ecosystem Goods & Services are also listed in Table 8 which helps identify what consideration need to be given and how the Plan addresses these elements.

- Air Quality
  - Regulating Services: Climate regulation, Air quality regulation, Pollution control, Pollination, Noise regulation, Local climate regulation.
- Soil Quality
  - Provisioning Goods: Food, Fibre, Fresh water, Biofuels, Timber
  - Regulating Services: Water quality regulation, Erosion control, Pollution control, Soil quality regulation, Water regulation, Flood regulation, Wild species diversity.



- **Water Quality**
  - Provisioning Goods: Fresh water, Water
  - Regulating Services: Climate regulation, Water quality regulation, Pollution control, Disease and pest control, Water regulation, Flood regulation, Local climate regulation, Wild species diversity

Consequently, while not specific Special Qualities, Air, Soil and Water quality are important parameters for a healthy functioning landscape and underpin the Ecosystems Approach. For example, the water quality of the Wye enables abstraction of drinking water at Lydbrook and Monmouth and this can be impacted on by run off into the river through a combination of poor soil management and adverse weather.

## **6.4 Statistics for the AONB**

**6.4.1 Data:** The fundamental challenge with the use of any statistics for the AONB is the correlation of the data with the AONB boundary. The boundaries of the AONB do not generally follow any standard geographical data collection unit (such as post code areas, Wards, Parishes or Local Authority Areas). Therefore there is very little data collected that relates directly to the AONB. Greater effort is being made by government agencies to ensure that monitoring by partners is coordinated and data disaggregated for the AONB. This will help avoid wasting effort through slightly different methodologies or monitoring subjects being pursued in different areas where they could have been linked up. However data is rarely compatible between England and Wales making it is extremely difficult to gain consistently accurate statistical information for the whole AONB.

**6.4.2 Census data:** The 2011 census, the most recent available, provides a large amount of information about the population within the Wye Valley AONB, which totals 29,300 people in 13,450 dwellings. The 2001 census data gave a population of 26,374, up from 24,370 in 1991, with 11,129 households up from 9,429 households in 1991.

**6.4.3 Land types and Habitats in the Wye Valley AONB:** Phase 1 Habitat mapping is being completed for the AONB. However the final data is not yet available, so it is not possible to provide AONB wide information on habitats and land uses. This data will be analysed as soon as it is available to provide a more definitive AONB wide breakdown of habitats and evidence for project development, delivery and monitoring. Meanwhile the identification of land types below (Table 3) is a reworking of an exercise developed by Dr George Peterken and used in previous Management Plans and originating in the AONB Nature Conservation Strategy 1999. Listed are all the land types that could be differentiated on the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 maps, then tallied for each of the 326 intersections of the 1km grid that fall within the AONB. Each intersection represents 100 ha, e.g., the area of conifer woodland is estimated at 1,800 ha. The accuracy of the estimates diminishes with the area of each land type. Thus, there is a level of confidence that the area of farmland (including orchards) is 59-60% of the AONB, but the area of marshland is unlikely to be exactly 100 ha, though it must be very small, and some very small habitats (e.g., heaths) failed to coincide with a grid intersection.

6.4.4 The OS classification itself will be approximate. Thus, it fails to pick up important habitats (eg cliffs), and the balance between woodland types may be both approximate and out-of-date. Compared to estimates in the 2015-20 management plan, there is more woodland, less farmland, and fewer small fields, fewer orchards and more development. Some of this will be due to different OS editions, but some will reflect the changing judgements about what to assign where.

6.4.5 The collation of data on Geographical Information Systems (GIS) for the State of the AONB Report will in time validate and/or supersede these estimates. However as estimates they provide a useful indication of land types in the AONB.

**Table 3: Land types in the Wye Valley AONB**

Aggregated land types	Land Types	Number of grid intersections for each land type	Number of grid intersections for each aggregated land type	Proportion of AONB %
Woodland	Broadleaved	23	86	26.4
	Mixed	31		
	Conifer	18		
	Scrub	14		
Non-intensive	Marsh	1	22	6.7
	Small fields	15		
	Parkland	3		
	Bracken, Heath, Rough Grassland	3		
Farmland	Undifferentiated	192	194	59.5
	Orchards	2		
Open water	Rivers	7	8	2.5
	Pools	1		
Development	Rural houses	7	16	4.9
	Roads	5		
	Urban	4		
TOTAL		326		100

6.4.6 The above data from the 2015-20 management plan was used in the Wye Valley AONB Ecosystem Goods and Services report 2011 to identify the ‘Broad Habitat types’ for the AONB, as outlined in the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA). Table 4 shows how the AONB contains 7 of the 8 ‘Broad Habitat types’.

**Table 4: Broad Habitat types in the Wye Valley AONB**

Broad Habitat type (UK NEA)	Examples in Wye Valley AONB
Enclosed Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmland: c. 19400 ha, 59.5% of AONB</li> </ul> Major Agricultural Land Uses (2016 MEOP data for English part of AONB) include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crops &amp; Fallow: (50.5%)</li> <li>Permanent Grass: (31.5%)</li> <li>Temporary Grass (8.5%)</li> </ul>

	Other (including set aside, farm owned woodland, rough grazing) (9.5%)*
Woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Woodland: c9000ha, 27.5% of AONB. Of which: Broadleaved: 5595 ha Mixed: 523 ha Conifer: 1994 ha Young Trees/Other: 880 ha SSSI: 1587 ha Wye Valley Woods SAC: c918ha Public Forest Estate: 5003ha</li> </ul>
Semi-Natural Grasslands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassland: c4900 ha, 14.99% of AONB Semi-improved grassland: 4,833 ha Unimproved grassland: 36 ha Marsh: 39 ha</li> </ul>
Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Houses, Roads, Urban approx. 1600 ha, 4.9% of AONB.</li> </ul>
Freshwaters – Openwaters, Wetlands and Flood Plains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>River Wye, tributaries and pools, 2.5% of AONB.</li> <li>Flood Plain Habitat, particularly in Herefordshire Wye meadows.</li> </ul>
Mountains, Moorlands and Heaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some Bog and Lowland Heath habitat such as Cleddon bog and Broad Meend Heath. Bracken, Heath, Rough Grassland: 300ha</li> <li>Inland rock and scree habitats present in cliffs throughout the Wye Valley gorge as well as some limestone pavement.</li> </ul>
Coastal Margins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited area of salt marsh and intertidal sediments on tidal reach of the Wye.</li> </ul>
Marine	N/A

6.4.7 **Priority Habitats** have been identified by Natural England. There are 28 Priority Habitats in England, 11 of these Habitats are found in the English part of the AONB (see Table 5). The former UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats lists identifies those habitats that are the most threatened and requiring the greatest conservation action. Currently the comparable information is not available for the Welsh side of the AONB, although there is a NERC Section 42 list of Priority Habitats in Wales. However, the England data shows that Tradition Orchards make up nearly 1% of the total English resource of that Priority Habitat, this is up from 0.87% in the 2015-20 State of the AONB report. Data for Wales also shows Traditional Orchards make up 6.1% of the total Welsh resource. Also grassland habitats make up approximately 0.24% of the English national resource, and deciduous woodlands are 0.4% of the national resource. Of the Priority Habitats in SSSIs over 72% are in Favourable condition and a further 21.7% in Unfavourable but recovering status (see Table 6).

**Table 5: Priority Habitat on English side of AONB**

Priority Habitat (on English side of AONB)	Total Area (ha)	% of total PH	% of AONB
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		<b>resource</b>	
Deciduous Woodland	2946	0.4	14.12
Traditional Orchards	154	0.96	0.74
Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland*	175	0.24	0.84
Lowland Meadows	122	0.55	0.59
Mudflats	30	0.01	0.14
Lowland Dry Acid Grassland	1.5	0.01	0.01
Lowland Heathland	11	0.02	0.05
Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh	5	0.00	0.02
Lowland Calcareous Grassland	3	0.01	0.02
Purple Moor-grass and Rush Pastures	4	0.04	0.02
No main habitat but additional habitat present*	451.5	0.22	2.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>3903</b>		<b>18.71</b>

\*(Non-priority Habitat)

**Table 6: Condition of Priority Habitats in England**

<b>Priority Habitat (on English side of AONB)</b>							
<b>area (ha)</b>	<b>Condition within SSSIs</b>				<b>Outside SSSIs</b>		
Total English Priority Habitat	Total in SSSIs	Total Favourable	Total Un-favourable recovering	Total Un-favourable	Total outside SSSIs	Total Within HLS	Non-SSSI, Non-HLS
3903	999	721	216	61	2904	625	2279

6.4.8 **Agricultural statistics:** According to the DEFRA Agricultural Census for 2016, agricultural land use amounts to 13,290ha of the English part of the AONB (64%). The land use and cropping split for England is shown in Table 7. Comparison with previous years' data will be included in the State of the AONB report.

**Table 7: AONB land use and cropping in England**

	<b>Crops &amp; Bare Fallow</b>	<b>Temporary Grass</b>	<b>Permanent Grass</b>	<b>Rough grazing</b>	<b>Woodland</b>	<b>Other</b>
Total	6717ha	1115ha	4217ha	163ha	870ha	205ha
% of AONB in England	32%	5%	20%	0.8%	4.2%	1%
% of agric. area	51%	8%	32%	1%	6.5%	1.5%

**Table 8: Special Qualities of the Wye Valley AONB**

Special Qualities [SQ]	Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural	
1	<b>Overall Landscape</b>					
16 Landscape Management Zones (see Table 1) with key feature	Nationally designated protected landscape: Outstanding (see county Landscape Character Assessments and LandMap)	Whole AONB	Purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty	Sustainable-land management &/or ownership that conserves or enhances key landscape characteristics and features Inappropriate land management may degrade or destroy landscape features; (including neglect, addition of inappropriate features, ongoing loss & decline of elements that define landscape character resulting in increased uniformity and loss of distinctiveness)	P: Food*, Fibre*, Fresh water*, Biofuels* Genetic resources*, Timber*, Species diversity*, Water*, Navigation*, Health products*, Bioenergy*, Pharmaceutical products* R: Climate regulation†, Water quality regulation†, Erosion control†, Air quality regulation†, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Disease and pest control†, Soil quality regulation†, Noise regulation†, Water regulation†, Fire hazard regulation†, Flood regulation†, Local climate regulation†, Wild species diversity*, Coastal defence†, Carbon sequestration† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*, Employment*	
	<b>Biodiversity</b>					
2.	Woodlands	Diversity of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) including 35 SSSIs and many ancient / veteran trees (see SQ18). Some plantation and other	27.5% woodland cover in AONB. c6685 ha of Ancient woodland covers 20.42% of AONB. SSSIs cover 1587 ha. 4.85% of AONB. Public Forest Estate (PFE) cover 15.3% of AONB	Varied; much ASNW under managed, some PAWS being restored [in English part of AONB 71% of woodland SSSIs in favourable condition. Some sites fragmented / isolated	Changes in land management, including neglect of much private small woodland and road & bank side trees Ongoing degradation of ancient woodland sites by the continuing existence of conifers and other non-native species, including replanting of ASNW with conifers Degradation of features of the historic environment Fragmentation of ancient woodland sites by land use changes	P: Timber*, Fuelwood*, Fresh water*, Species diversity* R: Climate regulation†, Carbon sequestration†, Erosion control†, Flood regulation†, Pollination†, Disease & pest control†, Air & water quality regulation†, Soil quality regulation†, Noise regulation† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*

Special Qualities [SQ]	Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural	
	woodland. 50 SMs and 33 Listed Buildings within woodlands.			Climate change Pest & diseases Pollution, especially ammonia and impacts of nitrogen deposition on woods and trees		
	Wye Valley Woodlands SAC	c918 ha 2.8% of AONB	English part of AONB, 61.75% of SSSI woodland in Wye Valley Woodlands SAC in favourable condition. 28.99% in Unfavourable-recovering condition.	Degradation through neglect Degradation by specific alien &/or expanding species (eg. cherry laurel, Himalayan balsam, deer, grey squirrel) and tree diseases		
3.	The river & tributaries	Main river SAC and SSSI, 6 SMs and 70 Listed Buildings within Flood Zone 3. Nationally important for water based recreation and one of the key reasons why people visit the AONB. Drinking water extracted at 2 locations from Wye (Lydbrook	58 miles (92km) of main river (1.3% of AONB) and a similar length of tributaries and streams 2,790 ha of Flood Zone 3 floodplain	English part of the AONB, 18.6% of SSSI/SAC in favourable condition, remaining 81.4% in unfavourable-recovering condition. [Sediment levels & diffuse pollution of concern] (NE, NRW), Water quality is good,	Degradation of natural processes, including constraints on flooding Land use impacts may degrade or destroy features e.g. loss of riverside grassland, siltation from poor soil management, loss of historic environment features, engineering for recreational interests etc. Invasive alien species Diffuse Pollution, including the leaching of chemicals from agricultural land Point source pollution, including increased development overflowing old drainage and sewerage	P: Food*, Water*, Fibre*, Navigation*, Bioenergy*, Health products* R: Climate regulation†, Water regulation†, Water quality regulation†, Fire hazard regulation† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Health benefits*

Special Qualities [SQ]	Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural	
	& Monmouth). Wye voted 'best river in England & Wales' 2010 by the Our Rivers Campaign, (run by RSPB, WWF-UK, the Angling Trust and the Salmon and Trout Association)		although river & many streams suffering from some pollution.	systems  Changes through climate change and altered seasonal rainfall.  Spread of disease, such as <i>Phytophthora</i> infection of riparian alders		
4.	Species-rich grassland, including small field pattern of un/semi-improved grassland, often bounded by drystone walls or old hedges	Very few SSSIs, 133 CLWS Target area for HLS	Phase 1 habitat surveys record 14.87% of AONB as semi-improve species poor & rich grassland Strongholds for unimproved and semi-improved grassland include Hewelsfield & St Briavels Common, Monmouthshire AONB, southern parts of Herefordshire AONB and Woolhope Dome	Prone to neglect [Hewelsfield & St Briavels Common Parish Grassland survey] Some sites fragmented / isolated	Continuing degradation through neglect and/or Change in ownership &/or land management (including overgrazing, tree planting or incorporation into 'garden')  Development of land for housing	P: Food*, Biofuels*, Fresh water*, Genetic resources*, Species diversity* R: Climate regulation†, Carbon sequestration†, Air & water quality regulation †, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Erosion control†, Soil quality regulation†, Disease and pest control†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*

<b>Special Qualities [SQ]</b>	<b>Recognition</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Condition [data / reason]</b>	<b>Changes or threats</b>	<b>Ecosystem Goods* &amp; Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural</b>
5. Boundary habitat diversity & connectivity, e.g. between grassland & woodland, farmland & heathland, tidal river & ASNW, hedges &/or drystone walls, lanes, banks, verges and fields & woods	Varied, locally or regionally important as landscape &/or habitat, heritage &/or socio-economic feature	Throughout AONB	Varied	Damage and degradation through change in ownership &/or land management, including removal, inappropriate activity, road widening	P: Food*, Fibre*, Fresh water*, Biofuels* Genetic resources*, Timber*, Species diversity*, Health products*, Pharmaceutical products* R: Climate regulation†, Water quality regulation†, Erosion control†, Air quality regulation†, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Disease and pest control†, Soil quality regulation†, Noise regulation†, Water regulation†, Fire hazard regulation†, Flood regulation†, Local climate regulation†, Wild species diversity*, Coastal defence† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*, Employment*
<b>Geological</b>					
6. Silurian Rocks	Grey / Brown rocks and soils (series of marine sandstones, limestones and shales with mudstones in the Upper Silurian which are the lowest of the terrestrial Old Red Sandstone rocks)	Woolhope Dome	Exposures in small old quarries	Little used as a traditional building material	P: Food*, Fibre*, Biofuels*, Fresh water*, Genetic resources* R: Climate regulation†, Air & water quality regulation †, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Erosion control†, Soil quality regulation†, Disease and pest control† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*
7. Lower Devonian Old Red Sandstone	Good; creates fertile red soils of South Herefordshire (contain	Underlies about 60% of AONB	Good Outcrops, eg Wilton Road, Ross	Vernacular building material, although rarely used in modern architecture due to softness of rock	P: Food*, Fibre*, Biofuels*, Fresh water*, Genetic resources* R: Climate regulation†, Air & water quality regulation †, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Erosion control†, Soil quality regulation†, Disease



Special Qualities [SQ]	Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural	
		mudstones, sandstones and clarets, the continuation of the Old Red Sandstone rocks)			and pest control† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*	
8.	Quartz Conglomerate	Good, (Quartz Conglomerate Upper Devonian Upper Old Red Sandstone, overlain by Tintern Sandstone)	Prominent seams between Tintern and Ross	Good Outcrops, eg Coppett Hill & Doward	Traditionally used locally in millstones and in drystone walls, limited modern use	P: Genetic resources* R: Climate regulation†, Air & water quality regulation †, Erosion control†, Soil quality regulation†, Disease and pest control† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*
9.	Carboniferous Limestone	Good (laid down in clear tropical seas and the overlying Coal Measures deposited on land in equatorial region)	Underlies about 25% of AONB south of Ross	Good Outcrops, especially cliffs and quarries	Quarrying; two working quarries in, and one bordering, AONB Loss of working small quarries	P: Food*, Fibre*, Biofuels*, Fresh water*, Genetic resources* R: Climate regulation†, Air & water quality regulation †, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Erosion control†, Soil quality regulation†, Disease and pest control† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*
10.	Riverine geomorphology	Good, incised meanders & superimposed drainage globally important examples for educational purposes	Along length of river	Good	Natural processes, including flooding and movement of meanders, potentially exacerbated by extreme weather Invasive alien species Land use impacts may degrade or destroy features e.g. siltation, engineering for recreational interests or flood defence	P: Food*, Water*, Navigation* R: Climate regulation†, Water regulation†, Water quality regulation†, Fire hazard regulation† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Health benefits*

Special Qualities [SQ]	Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural	
<b>Visual and Sensory</b>						
11.	Picturesque, extensive & dramatic views.	72 viewpoints identified. 20 included in Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme including 4 SMs at Piercefield.	Throughout AONB but majority overlooking the Wye	Varied; some spectacular, some overgrown, some inaccessible, health & safety poor at some [Assessment of Historic & Picturesque Viewpoints in AONB, 2001]. Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme conserved &/or enhanced 12.	Changes in ownership &/or land management may degrade or block both physical access to viewpoints and/or the view window Inappropriate land management may degrade or destroy the landscape viewed from a viewpoint including large single structures, large developments or the cumulative impact of small developments	P: Genetic resources*, Timber*, Species diversity* R: Erosion control†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*
12.	Overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness / wildness	Varied	Much of AONB	Poor to good, with localised disturbance from heavy traffic and individual vehicles and military aircraft [CPRE & CCW maps]	Changes in land management including new or expanding development and intensification of use (i.e. inappropriate tourism and recreation or increasing road or air traffic) Loss of trees due to disease Change driven by new standards and legislation e.g. street lighting, highway construction may lead to loss of tranquillity and sense of remoteness	C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*
<b>Historic Environment</b>						

<b>Special Qualities</b> [SQ]	<b>Recognition</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Condition</b> [data / reason]	<b>Changes or threats</b>	<b>Ecosystem Goods* &amp; Services†</b> P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural
13. Prehistoric sites from Palaeolithic to Iron Age	Palaeolithic occupation at Arthur's Cave 18 SMs	Standing stones at 3 sites. 11 Iron Age hillforts spread throughout AONB	Varied	Neglect or continuing unsympathetic management or use may degrade or destroy archaeological features eg. damage to archaeological horizons through deep ploughing, irresponsible treasure hunting or continued neglect which may lead to tree and shrub root damage	P: Food*, Fibre*, Genetic resources*, Timber*, Species diversity* R: Erosion control†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*
14. Roman and early Medieval sites including Offa's Dyke	Romano-British settlements and industry, Offa's Dyke early medieval boundary of unique cultural and historical importance	Throughout AONB, Offa's Dyke on eastern crest of Lower Wye Valley	Varied, see Offa's Dyke Conservation Management Plan 4 sections of Dyke on Historic England's Register of Heritage at Risk	Inappropriate land management and land use may degrade or destroy archaeological features  visitor access, Offa's Dyke Path National Trail erosion	P: Food*, Fibre*, Genetic resources*, Timber*, Species diversity* R: Erosion control†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*
15. Medieval Defensive and Ecclesiastical sites and associated landscapes	Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Cadw Register of Historic Landscapes. Goodrich & Chepstow Castles and Tintern Abbey in state	Lower Wye Valley from Ross to Chepstow	Fair to good 6 churches on Historic England's Register of Heritage at Risk	Changes in the visiting regime and increases in popularity of various sites.  Inappropriate land management may degrade or destroy archaeological features	P: Genetic resources*, Species diversity* R: Erosion control†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*

Special Qualities [SQ]	Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural	
	ownership.					
16.	Post-medieval industrial sites and associated landscapes	Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Cadw Register of Historic Landscapes	Throughout AONB.	Some sites under management, others suffering from neglect	Inappropriate land management may degrade or destroy archaeological features Changes in the visiting regime and increases in popularity of various sites.	P: Genetic resources*, Species diversity* R: Erosion control†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*
17.	Railway heritage	Line closed 1958	Disused line through length of AONB	Redundant track bed with decaying infrastructure	Further neglect of structures	P: Genetic resources*, Species diversity* R: Erosion control†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*
18.	Ancient and veteran trees	Significant numbers of ancient pollards and mature trees in hedges, woods and parkland estimated 2,350 in total (av 7/km <sup>2</sup> )	Throughout AONB	Poor	Neglect or inappropriate management may damage or destroy trees Pest and diseases	P: Timber*, Fuelwood*, Species diversity* R: Climate regulation†, Erosion control†, Flood regulation†, Disease & pest control†, Air & water quality regulation†, Soil quality regulation†, Noise regulation†, Carbon sequestration† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Employment*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*

<b>Special Qualities</b> [SQ]	<b>Recognition</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Condition</b> [data / reason]	<b>Changes or threats</b>	<b>Ecosystem Goods* &amp; Services†</b> P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural
19. Historic / registered parks and gardens	11 registered parks and gardens; Sufton Court, Hill Court, The Kymin, Troy House, High Glanau, The Argoed, Wyndcliffe Court, Piercefield Park, Itton Court, Mouton House, Chepstow Park, plus 48 of local significance in AONB	Through-out AONB	Fair to good none on EH 'risk register'	Inappropriate land management may degrade or destroy historic features (including the degradation of identified designed landscape)	P: Food*, Fibre*, Fresh water*, Biofuels* Genetic resources*, Timber*, Species diversity*, Water*, Health products*, Bioenergy* R: Climate regulation†, Water quality regulation†, Erosion control†, Air quality regulation†, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Disease and pest control†, Soil quality regulation†, Noise regulation†, Water regulation†, Fire hazard regulation†, Flood regulation†, Local climate regulation†, Wild species diversity*, Coastal defence†, Carbon sequestration† C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*, Employment*
20. Vernacular architecture: Farmsteads Commoners cottages, Estate houses	Varied – no one dominant style due to varying geology	Through-out AONB, dependant on geology	Varied, dependant on geology & building materials	Inappropriate management may degrade or destroy historic features	P: Genetic resources*, Species diversity* R: Climate regulation†, Water quality regulation†, Erosion control†, Air quality regulation†, Pollution control†, Noise regulation†, Water regulation†, Carbon sequestration† Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Employment*
<b>Language</b>					
21. Welsh language & accent; Forest of Dean & South Herefordshire dialects & accents	.% of Monmouthshire population able to speak Welsh increasing in all age groups except over 65s. Welsh	Varied through-out AONB	Welsh usage consolidating in Monmouthshire [2011 Census].	Loss of local identity can further erode traditional usages Influences of universal education and media	C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Employment*

Special Qualities [SQ]	Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural	
	taught in schools in Monmouthshire.					
<b>Access and Recreation</b>						
22.	Old tracks: often in sunken ways &/or bounded by drystone walls	Some in Rights of Way network, some County Road (Highways), some other highways, remainder private. No formal cataloguing and assessment*	Through-out AONB * Routes with public access for MPVs mapped by TRF at www.greenroadmap.org.uk and by GLASS at www.trailwise2.co.uk	Variable	Degradation of surface and/or boundary features due to changes in levels of usage &/or ownership or management, eg. water erosion, deep rutting and waterlogging, hard surfacing, widening, etc. Blockage and/or obstruction Unclear classification and misleading signage	P: Genetic resources*, Species diversity* R: Water quality regulation†, Erosion control†, Air quality regulation†, Pollution control†, Noise regulation†, Water regulation†, Fire hazard regulation†, Flood regulation†, Local climate regulation†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*
23.	Offa's Dyke Path	National Trail	Monmouth to Chepstow (35km)	maintained to the National Trail Standard	Erosion due to excessive usage leading to damage to Offa's Dyke earthwork Blockage and/or obstruction	C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*, Employment*
24.	Wye Valley Walk	Regional Route	Through length of AONB (70km / 45miles) [T1.1-76]	Fair to Good, aspiring to National Trail Standard	Degradation of route due to erosion and excessive usage and/or river flooding and/or landslips Blockage and/or obstruction Some sections still on Permissive Paths	C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*, Employment*
25.	Access land	Good	Forestry England and Welsh Government woodland and Woodland Trust holdings eg. Haugh Wood,	Good [Woodland dedicated as Access Land under CROW]	Changes in legislation or sale removing access rights	P: Food*, Fibre*, Fresh water*, Biofuels* Genetic resources*, Timber*, Species diversity*, Water*, R: Climate regulation†, Water quality regulation†, Erosion control†, Air quality regulation†, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Disease and pest control†, Soil quality regulation†, Water

Special Qualities [SQ]		Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural
			Chase Wood & lower Wye Valley woods			regulation†, Fire hazard regulation†, Local climate regulation†, Carbon sequestration†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*, Employment*
26.	Small commons; largest are Coppet Hill, Broadmoor, Staunton Meend, Whitelye, The Hudnalls	Generally good	455ha scattered through-out AONB	Generally good	Obstruction to access	P: Food*, Fibre*, Fresh water*, Biofuels* Genetic resources*, Species diversity*, Water*, Health products* R: Climate regulation†, Water quality regulation†, Erosion control†, Air quality regulation†, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Disease and pest control†, Soil quality regulation†, Water regulation†, Fire hazard regulation†, Flood regulation†, Local climate regulation†, Carbon sequestration†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*, Sense of place*, Health benefits*
					Lack of, or inappropriate, management	
	<b>Other</b>					
27.	Orchards	Traditional orchards mostly cider apples and perry pear also commercial apple standard and bush orchards	Throughout AONB, dependant on geology and topography. New commercial orchards being planted.	Many traditional orchards redundant or underused. New commercial planting of bush orchards	Lack of, or inappropriate, management practices, may damage or destroy trees, including weather damage or harmful grazing by stock, particularly horses Development of land for housing	P: Food*, Fresh water*, Biofuels*, Genetic resources*, Timber*, Species diversity*, Health products*, Pharmaceutical products* R: Climate regulation†, Carbon sequestration†, Water quality regulation†, Erosion control†, Air quality regulation†, Pollution control†, Pollination†, Disease and pest control†, Soil quality regulation†, Noise regulation†, Water regulation†, Fire hazard regulation†, Flood regulation†, Local climate regulation†, Wild species diversity* C: Recreation & Tourism*, Aesthetic values*, Cultural heritage*, Spiritual values*, Education*,

Special Qualities [SQ]	Recognition	Extent	Condition [data / reason]	Changes or threats	Ecosystem Goods* & Services† P: Provisioning, R: Regulating C: Cultural
					Sense of place*, Health benefits*, Employment*



**Table 9: ACTIVITIES & PRESSURES in the Wye Valley AONB**

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>
<b>Enjoyment</b>				
<b>Recreation</b>				
Boating (motorised water craft, including cruise boats, motor launches & jet skis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing use of river, particularly around Symonds Yat and between Chepstow and Tintern</li> <li>Demand for standardised launch facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic generation from pleasure cruises</li> <li>Local spend of users</li> <li>Gives a different perspective to appreciate Special Qualities of AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorly designed launch sites and channel engineering can degrade landscape character</li> <li>Wash from boats at speed can damage riverbank</li> </ul>	LMZ 09 SQ3 SQ10 SQ11 SQ12
Canoeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing use of river, particularly between Kerne Bridge and Monmouth</li> <li>Lack of launch facilities</li> <li>Demand for standardised launch facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic generation from canoe hire</li> <li>Local spend of users</li> <li>Health benefits of canoeing</li> <li>Gives a different perspective to appreciate Special Qualities of AONB</li> <li>Provides access for disabled and less abled people into countryside</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kerne Bridge and Symonds Yat reaching capacity at peak times</li> <li>Increased use can cause disturbance to other users and wildlife</li> <li>Can be associated with rogue camping</li> <li>Poorly designed launch sites and channel engineering can degrade landscape character</li> </ul>	LMZ 02 LMZ 09 SQ3 SQ10 SQ11 SQ12
Climbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concentrated on limestone cliffs in Upper and Lower Wye Gorge (SSSIs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic generation from guiding &amp; activity businesses</li> <li>Local spend of users</li> <li>Health benefits of climbing</li> <li>Gives a different perspective to appreciate Special Qualities of AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excessive use and development of routes can disturb biodiversity and geodiversity</li> <li>Can be associated with rogue camping</li> </ul>	LMZ 09 SQ9 SQ11 SQ12
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoted locally and nationally as a sustainable form of transport</li> <li>Vehicle speeds and size of many roads makes cycling dangerous</li> <li>Demand for off- road routes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health benefits of cycling</li> <li>Reduced emissions of cycle journeys</li> <li>Economic generation from cycle shops and hire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased off-road cycling can cause disturbance to other users and wildlife</li> <li>Car-borne cyclists can exacerbate parking demand at honey-pots</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ11 SQ12 SQ17

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requirement for standardised infrastructure and facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cycle tracks in Public Estate Forest facilitate greater usage of overall forest area and integration with other users.</li> <li>Local spend of cyclists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorly designed routes and infrastructure can degrade landscape character and historic environment features</li> </ul>	SQ22	
Field Sports		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic generation from shooting rights</li> <li>Local spend of participants</li> <li>Management can enhance biodiversity</li> <li>Facilitates appreciation of Special Qualities of AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poaching</li> <li>Disturbance to wildlife</li> <li>Noise from shoots</li> <li>Poorly designed cover crops can degrade landscape character</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ11 SQ12 SQ17	SQ22 SQ23 SQ24 SQ25 SQ26
Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salmon stocks depressed</li> <li>Demand for fishing lakes</li> <li>Seasonal elver fishing on tidal river extensively over-fished over decades due to inflated market price of product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic generation from fishing rights</li> <li>Local spend of anglers</li> <li>Gives a different perspective to appreciate Special Qualities of AONB</li> <li>Provides access for disabled and less abled people into countryside</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorly designed fishing infrastructure, eg. croys, lakes and stands, can degrade landscape character</li> <li>Over-fishing of natural stock depletes biodiversity &amp; economy</li> <li>Potential conflicts with other river users, particularly canoeists</li> </ul>	LMZ 02 LMZ 09 SQ3 SQ10 SQ11 SQ12	
Horse riding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disjointed Bridleway network leading to demand for correct signage, more accessible routes, including carriageways, permissive routes and motor-traffic free horse riding networks</li> <li>Use of verges for riding</li> <li>Demand for ménages, stables and paddocks</li> <li>Limited Rights of Way budgets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local spend of horse-riders</li> <li>Facilitates appreciation of Special Qualities of AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorly designed ménages, stables and paddocks can degrade landscape character</li> <li>Excessive use of routes can damage surfaces and features</li> <li>Potential (but rare) conflict with other users, eg cyclists and walkers, especially with dogs</li> <li>Over grazing can degrade species rich grassland</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ4 SQ11 SQ12 SQ17 SQ22 SQ26	

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>	
Rowing and rafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rowing clubs and courses at Ross and Monmouth</li> <li>Raft Races along various stretches of river</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic generation from regattas and races</li> <li>Local spend of users</li> <li>Health benefits of rowing and rafting</li> <li>Gives a different perspective to appreciate Special Qualities of AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential conflicts with other river users, particularly fishermen</li> </ul>	LMZ 02 LMZ 09 SQ3 SQ10 SQ11 SQ12	
Sight-seeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on honey-pot sites such as Ross-on-Wye, Tintern Abbey and Yat Rock</li> <li>Demand for view-brew-loo facilities</li> <li>High percentage of car use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local spend of sight-seers</li> <li>Facilitates appreciation of Special Qualities of AONB</li> <li>Provides access for disabled and less able people into countryside</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape implications of provision of facilities, including car parking</li> <li>Some sites reaching capacity at peak times</li> <li>Can exacerbate erosion to path surfaces and features, including archaeological sites and monuments</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ11 SQ12 SQ13 SQ14	SQ15 SQ16 SQ17 SQ23 SQ24 SQ25 SQ26
Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demand for way-marked, self-guided trails</li> <li>High percentage of car use to start walk</li> <li>Honey-pot sites such as Haugh Wood, Symonds Yat and Tintern</li> <li>Access for all enhancements</li> <li>Open Access</li> <li>Limited Rights of Way budgets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local spend of walkers</li> <li>Allows appreciation of Special Qualities of area</li> <li>Dissipated throughout AONB</li> <li>Health benefits of walking</li> <li>Provides access for disabled and less-abled people into countryside</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informal car parking on verges</li> <li>Potential conflict particularly between dogs and livestock</li> <li>Excessive usage can exacerbate erosion to paths and features</li> <li>Confusion over signage &amp; waymarking can lead to confrontation with other users</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ11 SQ12 SQ17	SQ22 SQ23 SQ24 SQ25 SQ26 SQ27
4x4 vehicles, trail motorcycles and off-road motorcycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing legal use of public unsealed County Roads and lack of clear signage</li> <li>Illegal use of public footpaths,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local spend of driver / riders</li> <li>Facilitates appreciation of some Special Qualities of AONB</li> <li>Provides access for disabled and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confusion over signage &amp; waymarking can lead to confrontation with other users</li> <li>Can exacerbate erosion to route</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ5	SQ19 SQ20 SQ21 SQ22

Activities in the AONB	Pressures in the AONB	Positive Impacts in the AONB	Negative Impacts in the AONB	AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association	
	bridleways and private land by non road-legal vehicles and/or non road-legal drivers/riders	less-abled people into countryside	surfaces and features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illegal trails can damage habitats and features</li> <li>• Adversely affects tranquillity in vicinity</li> <li>• Disturbance to other users and wildlife</li> </ul>	SQ11 SQ12 SQ13 SQ14 SQ15 SQ16 SQ17	SQ26
<b>Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Wye Valley’ a known brand and destination with estimated 2.5 million visitor days p.a.</li> <li>• Focus on honey-pot sites such as Ross-on-Wye, Tintern Abbey and Yat Rock</li> <li>• High percentage of car use</li> <li>• Increase in day trippers and long term decline in long stay visitor numbers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic generation for many sectors in local community, including food and accommodation providers</li> <li>• Local spend of tourists &amp; visitors</li> <li>• Facilitates appreciation of Special Qualities of AONB</li> <li>• Can be dissipated throughout AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumulative &amp;/or large scale tourism infrastructure at honey pots can degrade landscape character</li> <li>• Incremental infrastructure improvements to tourism facilities can urbanise and detract from landscape character</li> <li>• Increased pollution from high dependence on private transport</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ11 SQ12 SQ13 SQ14 SQ15 SQ16	SQ17 SQ19 SQ23 SQ24 SQ25 SQ26 SQ27
<b>Land management</b>					
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farms need to assess their practices and enterprises against legislation and cross-compliance</li> <li>• Diversification to continue employment</li> <li>• Changes in land ownership and land management</li> <li>• Increasing farm sizes through amalgamation</li> <li>• Increasing numbers of new hobby farmers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic generation of agricultural enterprises and spend of employees</li> <li>• Landscape custodianship of farming</li> <li>• Provision of local food and materials</li> <li>• Diversification allowing farmers to continue farming</li> <li>• Enhanced biodiversity, landscape, historic environment and diffuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential landscape, social and/or biodiversity impacts of new technologies and intensive management</li> <li>• Inappropriate land management practices may degrade or destroy landscape features including archaeological features (eg overstocking, continuous arable production, under-grazing)</li> <li>• Loss of traditional mixed farming practices and associated biodiversity</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ4 SQ5 SQ10 SQ11 SQ12 SQ13 SQ14 SQ18 SQ19 SQ20 SQ22 SQ27	

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing numbers of farmers, particularly hobby farmers, who are not engaged through the usual channels may be hard to reach in terms of encouraging specific management</li> <li>New technologies &amp; practices e.g. biofuels, polytunnels and carbon reduction</li> <li>Traditional farm buildings redundant for modern agricultural use sold off &amp;/or converted, leading to reinvestment in business and modern agricultural buildings</li> </ul>	<p>pollution measures through agri-environment schemes, Catchment sensitive Farming and/or new technologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New access established with agri-environment schemes</li> <li>Ecosystem services including pollination, opportunities for recreation and spiritual refreshment, flood storage and water regulation</li> <li>Sensitive barn conversions can deliver positive benefits in terms of the historic environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New farm buildings as permitted development can be out of character and scale in the landscape</li> <li>Poorly designed barn conversions can degrade landscape character &amp;/or impact on protected species roosts/nests (eg. bats and barn owls)</li> <li>Abandonment or inappropriate use of parkland and designed landscapes leading to loss of cultural heritage and character.</li> <li>pollutants and run-off degrade the ecological health of the wider catchment</li> </ul>		
Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timber prices, particularly for firewood, are buoyant and markets strong</li> <li>Neglect of much private small woodland, also road &amp; bank side trees</li> <li>Degradation of ancient woodland sites by the continuing existence of conifers and other non-native species</li> <li>Spread of species and pathogens, eg. deer, grey squirrel, boar and Chalara, Ramorum, Phytophthora etc.</li> <li>Fragmentation by land use changes</li> <li>Loss of woodland management skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic generation of forestry products, increasing labour and skills resource</li> <li>Large area of woodland in public or voluntary sector ownership (eg, NE, FC, WT, WiT, WG)</li> <li>Restoration to native woodland of plantations on ancient woodland sites'</li> <li>Public access to woodlands facilitates appreciation of Special Qualities of AONB</li> <li>Ecosystem services including carbon sequestration, flooding, water quality &amp; quantity amelioration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of management of much private woodland</li> <li>Trees obscuring views from roads and picturesque viewpoints</li> <li>Deer and squirrels affecting biodiversity and viability of many woods</li> <li>Inappropriate forestry operations &amp;/or timing (insensitive felling operations, inappropriate planting methods and track installations) may degrade or destroy landscape features including archaeological features</li> <li>Impacts of diseases on key tree species can degrade landscape character</li> </ul>	LMZ 01 LMZ 03 LMZ 04 LMZ 09 LMZ 10 LMZ 12 LMZ 13 LMZ 14 LMZ 15 LMZ16 SQ2 SQ3 SQ11 SQ12 SQ13 SQ14	SQ13 SQ14 SQ15 SQ16 SQ17 SQ18 SQ22 SQ23 SQ24 SQ25

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing potential of the developing wood-fuel market and supply chain and consequential increase in woodland management</li> </ul>			SQ16
<b>Economic &amp; Development</b>				
Telecommunications and other utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications for new masts or power-lines</li> <li>Telecommunications companies not covered by Section 85 of CRoW Act.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased ease of communications in valley.</li> <li>Advances in mast designs can be more sympathetic to surroundings and landscape character</li> <li>Undergrounding of electricity cables enhances landscape character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual intrusion of pylons and standardised masts, particularly when poorly designed and sited</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ11 SQ12
Energy, including renewables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal energy generated in AONB, but traditionally waterpower and wood-fuel</li> <li>Renewable energy promoted locally and nationally as part of sustainable development</li> <li>Demand for woodfuel, energy crops, small scale hydro, solar water heating and small scale / domestic wind turbines and larger Solar (PV) Farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape and biodiversity benefits of increasing use of coppice</li> <li>Development and use of renewable energy can increase environmental awareness and appreciation</li> <li>Use of historic mill locations for hydro-electricity and the management of woods for wood-fuel can bring in funds for the beneficial management of these features and landscapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New and non-traditional techniques (eg. new energy crops, large scale wind farms, Solar Farms) can degrade landscape character &amp;/or may impact on biodiversity (bats and birds with turbines, habitat loss with PV etc.)</li> <li>Re-use of historic mill locations can cause damage to historic structures and archaeological deposits</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ10 SQ11 SQ12
Mineral development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mineral reserves and consents for existing Limestone extraction remain at one large scale quarry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to interpret geodiversity, mineral heritage and Special Qualities of AONB</li> <li>Opportunities to use more local stone in buildings and development to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large scale quarries can detract from landscape character and/or damage to landscape features</li> </ul>	LMZ 09 LMZ 10 SQ2      SQ12 SQ3      SQ20 SQ4

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>
		enhance local character		SQ9
Housing & the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing allocation demands leading to Market towns encroaching on AONB and in-fill in villages</li> <li>Location of housing and development in places which are dependent on car use</li> <li>Unsympathetic and standardised designs of much modern housing and business premises</li> <li>Lack of Village Design Statements for many settlements</li> <li>Redundant farm buildings being converted to residential dwellings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Places for people to live and work in or near to the spectacular landscape of the AONB, facilitating appreciation of Special Qualities of AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor design of buildings and curtilage can detract from landscape character, eg. dominant rooflines, urbanising rural areas with oversized windows, natural hillsides engineered for car parking &amp; turning points, excessive lighting and inadequate landscaping or screening</li> <li>Poor location of housing and development encouraging car use and requiring additional standardised highway infrastructure</li> <li>destruction of habitat and disruption to the integrity of wider ecological networks and hydrological function (extent dependent on scale).</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ4 SQ11 SQ12 SQ20 SQ26 SQ27
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly locally in market towns or commute (Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff). Highest employment in service industries of tourism, public administration, finance and transport with small numbers in agriculture &amp; forestry</li> <li>Farm incomes declining.</li> <li>Need for growth</li> <li>Movement, such as Transition Towns, towards more sustainable communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment predominantly based on servicing the enjoyment and appreciation of the Special Qualities of the AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demands of hard economics and employment, uncoupled from environmental and community aspects, can have detrimental impact on landscape</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ11 SQ12 SQ20
Transport & Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic volumes; A40 busy at all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most parts of AONB accessible by</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual impact of much transport</li> </ul>	All LMZs

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>
[inc emissions]	<p>times of the day and, along with A49 and A4136, carries much freight traffic. A466 and B roads are less busy, outside of commuting times, though congestion can be caused by dawdling drivers. Agricultural vehicles can also hold up traffic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on private car use and commuting</li> <li>• Demands for standardised upgrades of road network, from A40 dual carriageway to unsurfaced byways</li> <li>• Rural bus services patchy</li> <li>• Wider issue of pollution and carbon footprint of the area.</li> </ul>	<p>road, facilitating appreciation of Special Qualities for people of all levels of personal mobility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural bus services facilitate access and appreciation of the Special Qualities of the AONB</li> </ul>	<p>infrastructure, including standardised concrete curbing, safety barriers, lighting &amp; signage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low / poor maintenance of existing surfaces &amp; features, inc bridges can detract from landscape character</li> <li>• disturbance to wildlife and potential severance of ecological corridors, especially on new or increasingly used roads.</li> </ul>	<p>SQ4 SQ11 SQ12</p> <p>SQ22</p>
Waste disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All waste for landfill exported</li> <li>• Government policy to divert waste from landfill eg. to community composting schemes or small-scale energy-from-waste schemes such anaerobic digestion plants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new landfill sites in AONB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There may be less local awareness of need to reduce &amp; reuse &amp; recycle.</li> </ul>	
<b>Community and Social</b>				
Local services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viability of village and rural services and facilities</li> <li>• Mobility of residents, including out commuting, increases competition between village, market town and city facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many good village shops &amp; busy market towns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of local services reduces community coherence and can lead to increasing social isolation</li> <li>• Deliveries of internet purchases may increase vehicle movements</li> </ul>	<p>All LMZs SQ12 SQ21</p>



<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet consumerism</li> </ul>			
Local housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantity of second homes and holiday lets</li> <li>• Attractiveness of area for both commuting and retirement</li> <li>• Lack of affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrepreneurs and fresh ideas brought into area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration of young people from area</li> <li>• Loss of potential local work force</li> <li>• Loss of indigenous knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Imbalance in local demographics</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ4 SQ12 SQ20 SQ21 SQ27
Community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pubs &amp; garages threatened by competition from supermarkets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good village halls &amp; pubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of local services reduces community coherence and increases social isolation</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ21 SQ27
<b>Other</b>				
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing greenhouse gas emissions leading to anticipated global warming and species migration</li> <li>• Considerable uncertainties over the nature of positive and negative impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New opportunities for agriculture and tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands and other habitats,</li> <li>• River &amp; tidal flooding impacts likely to increase</li> <li>• Water quantity likely to vary more</li> <li>• Increased rainfall may lead to more landslips</li> <li>• Increased vulnerability of historic environment features</li> <li>• Changes to agricultural crops and practices may change landscape character</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ5 SQ10 SQ13 SQ14 SQ15 SQ16 SQ17 SQ18 SQ19 SQ27
<b>Pollution</b>				
Water pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diffuse and point source</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incidents can be used to raise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollution and litter can degrade</li> </ul>	All LMZs

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>
	<p>pollution from urban (domestic and business) and agricultural sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ploughing of floodplain, steep valley slopes and other vulnerable soils</li> <li>• Water abstraction reduces river flows and dilution of pollutants</li> </ul>	<p>awareness of pollution issues and best practice</p>	<p>wildlife habitats and landscape character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural pollution may lead to contamination of soil and water</li> <li>• Soil erosion leads to loss of topsoil and sediment loading in river.</li> </ul>	<p>SQ3 SQ4</p>
Light pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding towns on edges of AONB</li> <li>• Demand for standardised highway lighting, particularly at junctions</li> <li>• Increasing use of ‘security’ lighting on exterior of buildings, and floodlighting of games pitches and riding arenas</li> <li>• Architectural designs with large areas of glazing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of bad practice can be used to promote best practice</li> <li>• Good practice enhances ‘Dark Sky’ experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly designed and/or standardised lighting can degrade landscape character</li> <li>• Poorly designed or directed lighting can disrupt biodiversity and disturb species behaviour, particularly bats</li> <li>• Poorly located or directed lighting can confuse motorists, degrade landscape character and waste energy</li> <li>• Modern building designs with large areas of glazing can appear as boxes of light in the countryside at night, and glinting glazing in the daytime.</li> </ul>	<p>All LMZs SQ11 SQ12 SQ20 SQ22 SQ26</p>
Noise pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy freight &amp; traffic using main roads</li> <li>• Domestic / garden noise from lawnmowers, strimmers, chippers etc.</li> <li>• Military training flight path down valley</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of bad practice can be used to promote best practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Localised loss of tranquillity</li> </ul>	<p>All LMZs SQ2      SQ17 SQ3      SQ18 SQ4      SQ19 SQ5      SQ20 SQ11     SQ22 SQ12     SQ23 SQ13     SQ24</p>

<b>Activities in the AONB</b>	<b>Pressures in the AONB</b>	<b>Positive Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>Negative Impacts in the AONB</b>	<b>AONB Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) and Special Quality [SQ] association</b>	
				SQ14 SQ15 SQ16	SQ25 SQ26
Visual pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for more obtrusive signage</li> <li>• Bi-lingual signs require larger signs to accommodate extra wording</li> <li>• Increasing use of plastic for some modern agricultural practices</li> <li>• Poor design of large buildings, eg barns and business warehouses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of bad practice can be used to promote best practice</li> <li>• Undergrounding of electricity cables removes visual obstructions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly designed and situated development in and around AONB can degrade landscape character</li> <li>• Agricultural use of extensive areas of plastic can degrade landscape character</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ11 SQ12 SQ14 SQ15 SQ16 SQ17 SQ18	SQ19 SQ20 SQ21 SQ23 SQ24 SQ26
Fly tipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistent levels of localised fly tipping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fly tipping can damage wildlife and the Special Qualities of the AONB</li> <li>• Farmers &amp; landowners have to bear costs of clean up on their land.</li> </ul>	All LMZs SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ5 SQ11	SQ12 SQ22 SQ25 SQ26 SQ27

## **PART 2 STRATEGY**

### **Kingfisher**

willows hang riverward  
as if to taste its tune  
washed banks ask for sun

I stand, quite still, lost  
in a hypnosis of ripples  
listen to the river

and then: a sudden dart  
scribes a long delightful moment  
viridian over water  
a slice of fire between greys

this flash of blue  
the certainty of beak  
the reassurance of wild

is all I could wish for  
this one rainy day

-

Harriet Fraser

## 7. INTRODUCTION

The following pages develop the strategy for the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025. However, they should not be read in isolation to the preceding Part 1 – Outline.

### 7.1 Themes and aims

7.1.1 Five main themes were established in the first statutory AONB Management Plan 2004-2009. Following subsequent reviews these five themes have been tried and tested and are continued in this Management Plan for 2020-2025. Each theme is summarised in the five following paragraphs.

#### 7.1.2 Theme 1: Our unique landscape

Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of *our unique landscape* is the primary theme. This addresses the components of natural beauty: the landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic environment and the cultural heritage. The aim for each component is as follows:-

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape in the Wye Valley AONB, with its natural and cultural features and processes and the Special Qualities and features of the Landscape Management Zones.
- to conserve, enhance and restore, the biodiversity of the AONB through robust ecological networks
- to conserve and enhance sites that are important for the scientific and general understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the geodiversity heritage of the AONB.
- to conserve and sympathetically manage the historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB and promote engagement with and understanding of it.

Additionally the dominant land uses that sustain the landscape need to be considered. The aims for this are:-

- to foster viable farming enterprises that manage the land in ways that conserve and enhance the natural resources and local distinctiveness of the AONB, and
- to ensure woodlands and trees throughout the Wye Valley AONB are managed sustainably in a way that protects and enhances the outstanding ancient woodland character of the area, and provides economic, environmental and social benefits.

#### 7.1.3 Theme 2: Development and Transport

Planning the protection of the AONB through appropriate *development and transport* is the second theme. This addresses the development, infrastructure and protection of the landscape with the aim for each component as follows:-

- Ensure that all development within the AONB and its setting conserves and enhances the AONB.
- Ensure all minerals development in the AONB and its setting is compatible with the purposes of AONB designation

- Ensure the most sustainable, effective and efficient use and supply of services and energy within and impacting on the AONB, compatible with the purposes of AONB designation
- Ensure transport in the AONB is sustainable and integrated and compatible with the purposes of AONB designation.

#### 7.1.4 Theme 3: Vital communities

Safeguarding rural industries and local socio-economic needs that maintain *vital communities* is the third theme. This addresses the vibrancy of the local communities and the viability of local businesses that sustain the landscape features. The aim is:-

- to engender thriving local communities that have a high quality of life with a healthy economy that supports the natural beauty of the area.

Farming and forestry have already been covered above, but other aspects of the rural economy and rural regeneration also need to be considered. The aim is:-

- to foster viable rural enterprises that derive benefit from and enhance the natural resources and local distinctiveness of the AONB.

Tourism is included under the next theme.

#### 7.1.5 Theme 4: Enjoying the AONB

Promoting and ensuring that the general public are *enjoying the AONB* in sustainable ways is the fourth theme. This addresses the enjoyment of the special landscape features by everybody. The aims are that:-

- Sustainable tourism, based upon the natural beauty and local distinctiveness of the AONB, continues to enrich the lives of visitors, operators and employees while contributing positively to the conservation and enhancement of the area.
- People continue to enjoy active recreation in the Wye Valley that does not detract from the natural beauty of the area.
- People's appreciation and understanding of why the area is designated is increased.

#### 7.1.6 Theme 5: Achieving success together

Managing and governing the AONB effectively to ensure we are *achieving success together* is the fifth theme. This addresses the need to manage and co-ordinate the above aspects to maximise the benefits for everyone. The aim is:-

- to continue proactive and imaginative achievements in the Wye Valley AONB through successful and productive partnerships.

This includes a Charter for Residents and visitors that identifies what you can do to help support the AONB.

## 7.2 **Structure of the Strategy**

7.2.1 In the following pages each theme outlined above is divided into topics drawn from the bullet points identified. Each topic has a brief outline which highlights significant issues. These must be read in conjunction with Part 1. The aim for that topic is given, based on the Vision. The Strategic Objectives for that topic are then listed; these are the policy proposals for the Management Plan. A separate Action Plan for the Wye Valley AONB is available which outlines the delivery of this Plan and the monitoring and evaluation programme.

7.2.2 This Management Plan is considered a higher tier plan in relation to the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). The 2015-2020 HRA concludes that there are no likely significant effects on any European sites (SACs & SPAs). However, there are instances where uncertainty remains and the HRA document highlights that in such instances it is acceptable to defer the HRA down to the lower tier plan or project level, when more detail will be available. This will ensure that actions do not compromise the conservation objectives of any European sites.

### **7.3 Interpretation of Strategic Objectives**

7.3.1 All the Strategic Objectives in the Management Plan must be interpreted in the light of:

- the statutory purpose of the Wye Valley AONB designation, that is to conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty
- the 20 Year Vision for the AONB
- the aim of the theme's topic
- the accompanying text to the topic
- the texts and tables of Part 1 of the Management Plan

7.3.2 Where there are any doubts or conflicts, Strategic Objectives should be interpreted using a 'purposive' approach which returns to the statutory purpose of the AONB designation, '*to conserve and enhance natural beauty*'.

7.3.3 In practical terms this means that:

- where there may be more than one possible interpretation of a Strategic Objective, the one which reflects the aim behind the Strategic Objective, (which will always be to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB) must be applied.
- where there appears to be an irreconcilable conflict between two or more Strategic Objectives, or an action under one Strategic Objective conflicts with another, the interpretation which achieves the statutory purpose of the AONB shall be made.
- where any action, plan or project, decision, (& etc.) could be interpreted as being supported by any particular Strategic Objective (or policies), but its exercise would conflict with conserving and enhancing natural beauty, the statutory purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty shall override any support provided by the Strategic Objective.

## THEME 1

### **8. OUR UNIQUE LANDSCAPE – conserved & enhanced**

This section outlines the aims and strategic objectives for landscape, biodiversity, and heritage, and for farming and woodlands, for the Wye Valley AONB.

#### **8.1 LANDSCAPE**

8.1.1 The character and quality of the landscape, crafted by successive generations of land management, underpins the AONB designation and supports a host of environmental, social and economic benefits. From contributing to our health and wellbeing to supporting the tourism industry, the landscape is a changing backdrop to our daily lives. However, baselines shift and people may not notice that there are subtle effects from climate change and the loss of nature. Our landscape still looks pretty and may not appear, to some, to be in emergency. But we have lost and are losing ‘bio-abundance’ as well as ‘bio-diversity’; there are some extinctions and once common species are becoming rare. By conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape, and the condition of its characteristic features, the public will continue to benefit from the AONB now and into the future.

8.1.2 A common understanding of what makes each landscape special enables people to plan ahead to conserve and enhance the distinct character and unique sense of place of that landscape, whilst enabling adaptation to changing conditions and supporting the needs of people and local communities. For example, landscape qualities are increasingly used in marketing agricultural products and diversification enterprises, securing financial rewards for those who manage the character of the area which also enhances recreation and rural tourism.

8.1.3 LandMap and the Landscape Character Assessments covering the lower Wye valley identify the characteristics that make the landscape of the Wye Valley AONB so distinctive. These are used to define sixteen Landscape Management Zones (LMZs) in the AONB. Table 1 outlines the Features of each of the AONB Landscape Management Zones. Historic Landscape Character Assessments and National Character Areas in England have also been produced. These can all help inform management and identify the choices and opportunities to plan and monitor proactively for change in a dynamic and evolving landscape.

8.1.4 There are many pressures on the natural beauty and landscape characteristics of the AONB. These are summarised in Table 9. Standardisation, urbanisation, habitat loss, climate change, pest and diseases and the speed and scale of change in modern technology can all have an erosive effect on the distinctive character of an area. Table 1 and Table 8 highlight the ecosystem services that the landscape features and Special Qualities provide as a healthy functioning landscape. Where these are under threat and the landscape is in danger of not functioning, mitigation and positive action should be targeted. There will be significant change to the landscape in the long term from climate change and diseases such as Ash Dieback. While not all changes are predictable, the aim of adaptation actions should be to retain a functioning



landscape, with a focus on resilience and robustness. The qualities for which the AONB is designated will remain important in the future, but climate change will intensify pressure on ecosystem services and functions. More joined-up action, at local and regional levels, will be needed to make the landscape and ecological network more resilient to changing pressures. In this way the decline in habitats and species, degradation of landscapes and erosion of natural resources can be halted and declines reversed. Much of this can be achieved through the landscape approach, nature based solutions and the adoption of Green Infrastructure (GI). Green Infrastructure, like the landscape approach, provides a multi-functional approach for environmental and economic issues as well as addressing social, health and well-being and the climate change and nature recovery emergency.

8.1.5 The Guiding Principle of the landscape scale approach identifies the four landscape management strategies of Conserve, Enhance, Restore and/or Create. This will help conserve and enhance the features and Special Qualities that maintain the uniqueness and natural beauty of the AONB. In and around the AONB this should concentrate on and support the characteristic semi-natural habitats linked and connected by a network of habitats such as woods, trees, hedgerows, drystone walls, rivers, ditches and ponds.

**AONB Aim:** Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape in the Wye Valley AONB with its natural and cultural features and processes and the Special Qualities and features of the Landscape Management Zones.

### Landscape Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-L1</b>	Promote and develop policies and initiatives to conserve, enhance, restore or create the features and elements that maintain the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB. Ensure their sustainable management and mitigate, reduce or remove detrimental features <i>[see also WV-L2, WV-P3, WV-P4 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-L2</b>	Encourage and enhance appropriate landscape scale and green infrastructure action by all particularly on consolidating ecosystem services and positively contributing to habitat connectivity that allows wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change <i>[see also WV-L1, WV-B2, WV-B3, WV-P3, WV-P4, WV-P5 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-L3</b>	Promote and encourage the use of the Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Landscape Characterisation to inform local distinctiveness in development plans, strategies, guidance and landscaping schemes <i>[see also WV-D2, WV-D3, WV-M2, WV-U4, WV-C3 and WV-S4]</i>
<b>WV-L4</b>	Ensure the establishment and collection of sufficiently comprehensive baseline data to monitor landscape condition and direction of change <i>[see also WV-H2, WV-P8]</i>

<b>WV-L5</b>	Support measures which increase public awareness and appreciation of the natural beauty and importance of the Wye Valley AONB <i>[see also WV-A1]</i>
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## 8.2 BIODIVERSITY

8.2.1 The Wye Valley AONB is particularly rich in wildlife and has a high concentration of designated sites covering approximately 10% of the AONB. There are 3 sites of international importance designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the European Union’s Habitats Directive in the AONB. The 3 SACs are the entire River Wye, over 900 hectares of ancient semi-natural woodland in the heart of the Wye Gorge, and a collection of sites in the lower Wye Valley used as roosts by Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats. Within a 10mile/16km radius of the AONB there is also the Severn Estuary SAC, Special Protection Area (SPA) & Ramsar site downstream from the AONB, the River Usk SAC to the west and Walmore Common Ramsar Site to the east. Of national importance in the AONB are 46 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) including 4 National Nature Reserves (NNRs). The majority of the SSSIs cover ancient semi-natural woodland spread throughout the AONB. The conservation of these sites is overseen by Natural England (NE) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Also of importance in the AONB are 3 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), managed by the respective local authority, and 204 County local wildlife sites, a few of which are managed as nature reserves by Gwent Wildlife Trust, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust or Herefordshire Wildlife Trust in their respective counties, and Plantlife and the Woodland Trust, with the rest on private land. Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (section 40) public bodies have a duty to conserve biodiversity. NE and NRW have a duty to report on the condition of SSSIs and whether they are in favourable condition (see Table 5 and Table 6). Species-rich grasslands are an important visual element in the AONB as part of the landscape of small fields, in churchyards, along road verges or other public areas, but they also play a vitally important part in providing the biodiversity of the area, protecting endangered plant species, providing habitat for bees and other pollinators, storing carbon and occupying a vital place in the ecosystem of the area.

8.2.2 Over half of the SSSIs on the English side of the AONB are in their optimal (‘favourable’) condition from a biodiversity perspective (NE 2018). This is due to many factors ranging between local, regional, national and global impacts. Much of the River Wye SSSI & SAC in the AONB is of moderate ecological status and good chemical status under the Water Framework Directive. The moderate ecological status is largely due to diffuse inputs from agriculture and point source sewerage (see the Nutrient Management Plan dashboard). The Wye Catchment Partnership has a shared understanding of the principal problems and their causes and acts as a focal hub in delivering action to correct the identified issues, including delivery of the Wye Nutrient Management Plan and Catchment Advisers aiding farmers. Therefore it is particularly important to consider the options where the condition of SSSIs & SACs are significantly affected by management of the wider landscape in which they occur.

There may also be an intensification of pressure on land and wildlife, and consequently on landscape and natural beauty, from visitor pressure, pests and diseases and climate change.

8.2.3 The aim of management actions and adaptations should be to retain the ecological value, with a focus on resilience and robustness, especially through nature-based solutions. ‘Making Space for Nature: A review of England’s Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network’, chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton (2010), identified that to make space for nature we need more, bigger, better and joined up sites to create a sustainable, resilient and more effective ecological network. The report, and the 25 Year Environment Plan recognised AONBs as having great potential to establish a coherent and resilient ecological network. The new Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs) and strategic planning policies are major tools in the creation of better ecological networks. They should ensure that existing wildlife is managed to the highest standards, that habitat improvement and creation becomes part of sustainable land management systems and businesses, and that land managers are provided adequate reward for the ecosystem services their land management provides.

8.2.4 In 2010 the UK signed up to the Biodiversity 2020 global vision and 5 strategic goals and ‘Aichi’ targets:-

- A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society.
- B: Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use.
- C: Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.
- D: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystems.
- E: Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

Progress towards securing UK biodiversity has fallen short of targets and ambitions. Ten measures within the 2020 strategy show a decline in the long-term with a further nine showing decline in the short-term (Defra, 2019). The IPPR (2019) have argued that policy change has been, ‘too slow, and limited to certain natural systems’, precipitating the ‘age of environmental breakdown’.

8.2.5 The UK Government’s 25-Year Environment Plan sets out the ambition for England to develop a growing and resilient network of land, water and sea that is richer in plants and wildlife. It includes a number of commitments for nature, including publishing a new strategy for nature to replace Biodiversity 2020. The Nature Recovery Network is a major commitment in the 25-Year Environment Plan, intended to improve, expand and connect habitats to address wildlife decline and provide wider environmental benefits for people.

8.2.6 In Wales the focus is on natural resource management, with the overall aim to ensure that Wales has increasingly resilient and diverse ecosystems that deliver economic, environmental and social benefits. The State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR 2016) assessed the extent to which natural resources in Wales are being sustainably managed, and recommended a proactive approach to building resilience. The SoNaR Report shows that overall biological diversity is declining and none of Wales’ ecosystems are currently showing all the attributes of resilience. The extent of

some habitats has also declined significantly, which can be seen by the loss of habitats and species. This means that unless action is taken, the benefits derived from natural resources are at risk. Area Statements will facilitate the implementation of the Natural Resources Policy and provide a useful context for the AONB Management Plan, providing valuable evidence of the important ecosystem services of the AONB.

8.2.7 The 2019 Colchester Declaration, by the National Association for AONBs states that “Nature recovery is central to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. Climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. Designated landscapes offer some of the most powerful solutions to the challenges of climate change”. Nature recovery and restoring ecosystems provide some of the essential solutions to reaching zero carbon emissions, as well as addressing many other factors vital for our survival and quality of life. These are not just distant global issues, they are the main challenges now for the Wye Valley and the country.

8.2.8 The potential for the Wye Valley AONB to contribute positively to nationally and internationally important habitats and species recovery is evident. The quality of the river and riverine habitat, with migratory fish and otters, are of European importance. Similarly the near continuous woodlands interspersed with species rich grassland make a high quality connected landscape. The Wye Valley is an important European stronghold for both the Lesser Horseshoe bat and the Common Dormouse. There are also many other nationally rare species with a restricted UK distribution that are found within the AONB, for example, the Lower Wye Valley is the second most diverse site for *Sorbus* in the British Isles with 19 taxa (second only to the Avon Gorge which hosts about 23 taxa) and two species that are confined to the AONB – namely *Sorbus parviloba* (Ship Rock Whitebeam) and *Sorbus ementiformis* (Doward Whitebeam). There are also species that are of local importance and although some species have been lost there is still considerable floral diversity in a range of habitats.

8.2.9 The concentration of priority species and habitats in the Wye Valley has led the AONB Partnership to be a leading force facilitating, encouraging and delivering joined-up, collaborative and cooperative initiatives with local partners that maintain and enhance biodiversity, halt further degradation and, where possible, establish restoration. Exemplar initiatives since 2001 include landscape scale projects such as the Woolhope Dome Project, the Ravine WoodLIFE project and the Wye Valley Nature Improvement Area application. The AONB Partnership is well placed to help provide more resilient and coherent ecological networks in and around the AONB, with healthy and well-functioning ecosystems delivering nature based solutions with multiple benefits for people and wildlife. Working at a landscape scale, properly planned ecological networks, including large restoration areas, can focus efforts on achieving a shift beyond conservation to enhancement and, where appropriate, restoration. A good example of this is the managed reintroduction of Pine Marten into the Forest of Dean and their migration into the AONB.

8.2.10 On-going monitoring of key species and habitats will be crucial to determining the effectiveness of various schemes and initiatives and overall delivery of biodiversity objectives. Where appropriate a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) may be required for a project or plan to identify more precisely the nature, scale or

location of the proposal, and its potential effects and necessary changes, in order to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of any European site(s).

8.2.11 The Wye Valley New Naturalist (2008), written by Dr George Peterken provides some useful background on the area.

**AONB Aim:** Conserve, enhance and restore, the biodiversity of the AONB through robust ecological networks.

### **Biodiversity Strategic Objectives**

<b>WV-B1</b>	Contribute to the delivery of national, regional and local Biodiversity targets and priorities for key habitats and species relevant to the AONB, in partnership with relevant organisations <i>[see also WV-P4 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-B2</b>	Encourage and support measures that contribute to the management of all statutory designated sites and County local wildlife sites so that they are in favourable condition and within robust ecological networks <i>[see also WV-L2, WV-B3 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-B3</b>	Promote the adoption of schemes and initiatives that sustain, enhance and recover the characteristic biodiversity of the AONB, and that enable ecological systems, networks and natural processes to accommodate and adapt to climate and other environmental change, including through nature based solutions and landscape scale habitat connectivity <i>[see also WV-L2, WV-B2, WV-T3 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-B4</b>	Identify species and diseases considered to be detrimental to the biodiversity value of the AONB and encourage their monitoring, management and, where appropriate, their control <i>[see also WV-F6 and WV-W4]</i>
<b>WV-B5</b>	Support the identification and monitoring of key indicator species and priority species and habitats, in partnership with conservation organisations, relevant individuals and the Local Biological Record Centres <i>[see also WV-P8]</i>
<b>WV-B6</b>	Promote awareness, sources of advice and involvement in biodiversity conservation by landowners, land managers, businesses, local communities, schools and the public including of impacts from outside the AONB <i>[see also WV-A1]</i>

## 8.3 GEODIVERSITY

8.3.1 The Wye Valley AONB contains some excellent geology with good and clear examples of geological features in the form of a variety of bedrocks exposed in quarries, cliffs and rock outcrops, and the geomorphology associated with the river. The geology underpins the topography, soils and biodiversity that make the landscape of the Wye Valley so outstanding. Geodiversity, as well as biodiversity, contributes to the delivery of provisioning, regulating, cultural and supporting ecosystem services. There are several geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Geological Sites (LGS) - formerly known as Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS). It is recognised that there are opportunities to increase the number of LGS/RIGS and generally make geological sites more accessible, intellectually and physically, to the general public. The Geological Conservation Review (GCR) identifies those sites that underpin the SSSI series and which includes Otter Hole GCR in the lower reaches of the Wye Valley.

8.3.2 The Woolhope Dome is an area of upfolded Silurian rocks which has sandstone at its heart surrounded by concentric ridges of limestone separated by clay valleys. This is separated from the Wye Valley by the Woolhope Fault. The form of the Wye Valley reflects the underlying rock. In the north where the valley is wider, there are upper Silurian mudstones, the lowest of the Old Red Sandstone rocks. Further south are Lower Devonian Sandstones which give a meandering narrow valley with sloping sides and interlocking spurs. This type of topography is repeated as the Welsh Border is crossed north of Monmouth. Away from the river valley are hills and plateau lands underlain by Lower Devonian sandstone. In the Wye Gorge area there are sheer cliffs of Carboniferous limestone with deeply incised meanders. This topography is repeated again on the limestone areas towards the Chepstow area. Other hard rock bands such as the Quartz Conglomerate stand out as crags on the hillsides, such as on Great and Little Doward and at the Kymin. The higher land of the Forest of Dean plateau stretching as far north as Chase Wood and Penyard Park has more resistant rock, the Upper Devonian Quartz Conglomerate, Carboniferous Limestone and Coal Measures.'

8.3.3. Sustainable Geotourism, using available trail guides and Apps, can draw visitors away from 'honey pot' sites and encourage more visitors to look at different aspects of the area.

**AONB Aim:** Conserve and enhance sites that are important for the scientific and general understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the geodiversity heritage of the AONB.

### Geodiversity Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-G1</b>	Support the identification and monitoring of significant geodiversity conservation features (SSSIs & LGS/RIGS), in partnership with geoconservation organisations and the local Record Centres. <i>[see also WV-P7 and WV-P8]</i>
<b>WV-G2</b>	Contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the geodiversity

	resource in line with Geodiversity Action Plans (GAPs) <i>[see also WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-G3</b>	Encourage and support measures that create and/or maintain the accessibility and conservation interest of sites of geological importance <i>[See also WV-M2 and WV-M3]</i>
<b>WV-G4</b>	Promote increased understanding and opportunities to appreciate the significance of the geodiversity of the AONB and the need for its protection and management <i>[see also WV-A1]</i>

## 8.4 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

8.4.1 The Wye Valley AONB has a rich heritage that has been host to many activities that have been instrumental in laying the foundations to the cultural identity of Britain. This is recognised in the high number of designated archaeological and heritage conservation sites. The lower part of the AONB is in the Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales (Cadw 1998). There are 126 Scheduled Monuments in the AONB and 10 registered Parks and Gardens. There are also 17 Conservation Areas and 959 Listed Buildings in the built environment of the AONB. Additionally there are many more nationally and regionally important monuments in the AONB that are not designated, along with a number of Unregistered Parks and Gardens (parks and gardens of local interest) and designed landscapes.

8.4.2 Heritage features are a unique, non-renewable asset. Like distinctive landscape features there are no breeding pairs of Iron Age Hill Forts. Similar to the landscape and the biodiversity, the features of the historic environment are under pressure from changes in land management and climate. Sound advice and examples of good practice are available but some features of the historic environment in the AONB, including some scheduled sites, are not in the best condition. This is often a reflection of present priorities, as well as changing management practices, with some sites suffering from neglect. Nearly 8% of heritage assets on the English side of the AONB are on the Register of Heritage at Risk. There are existing datasets on the vulnerability of designated historic environment and heritage assets and also the potential to broaden these datasets to encompass undesignated nationally important monuments. The appreciation and preservation of the historic environment is therefore a priority wherever possible, accepting the need for sympathetic management that has regard for other interests such as the SACs and financial viability. The amounts of public, private and charitable finance invested into the management of the historic environment is significant and needs to continue along with properly-considered changes to achieve viable uses that enable the heritage to continue to survive. Therefore management must focus on sustainability, especially in the context of climate change, rather than a cycle of repair and decay.

8.4.3 The Statement of Significance in Section 2.1.4 contains a brief summary of the historic environment of the Wye Valley. The Wye Valley National Character Area profile sections on ‘Key Characteristics’ and ‘Landscape Through Time’ provide further detail. The Offa’s Dyke Conservation Management Plan (2019) provides a condition assessment of the iconic historic monument, noting that in the AONB only 7% of the scheduled sections, and 18% of unscheduled sections, are in Favourable condition. The heritage of the Wye Valley is also closely linked with the neighbouring Forest of Dean. There are numerous publications and articles elaborating on many aspects of local history, including ‘Overlooking the Wye, A guide to the heritage of the Wye Valley’ a legacy publication of the £3million ‘Overlooking the Wye’ Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme.

**AONB Aim:** Conserve and sympathetically manage the historic environment and cultural heritage of the AONB and promote engagement with and understanding of it

### Historic Environment Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-H1</b>	Initiate and encourage schemes, policy development, advice and sympathetic management through partnerships and positive action to conserve, enhance and promote the historic environment, in conjunction with landowners, national agencies and other relevant organisations <i>[see also WV-P4, WV-P5 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-H2</b>	Promote establishment of baseline data to monitor change and improve the local databases of historic landscape assessments, conservation areas, locally important buildings, buildings at risk, ancient trees, heritage features and sites in the AONB in conjunction with Local Planning Authorities, local archaeological trusts and individuals <i>[see also WV-L4, WV-P8]</i>
<b>WV-H3</b>	Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the cultural heritage and historic environment <i>[see also WV-A1]</i>

## 8.5 FARMING

8.5.1 Agriculture occupies about 60% of the land in the AONB and continues to be an important part of the rural economy and a provider of rural landscape management. There is a wide variety of farm enterprises in the AONB ranging from soft fruit under polytunnels to High Nature Value Farming on unimproved grassland, from broiler chicken units to pedigree Hereford beef herds and from organic apple juice to asparagus production. Supplementing the agricultural businesses are renewable energy production and a complete spectrum of farm diversification businesses and re-developments of farm buildings. The majority (53%) of the AONB is farmed intensively.



8.5.2 Farming practices have crafted the land for millennia. Agricultural businesses have always adapted to remain profitable and the viability of enterprises enables land managers to conserve and enhance their holdings and their interests. However modern agriculture has evolved and many of the traditional habitats and practices that have created some of the distinctive features of the AONB are often commercially redundant. The future viability of farming and forestry is fundamental to the appearance of the Wye Valley landscape and many of the challenges, including from climate change, can only be solved by a mix of innovation and policy changes. For example the Wye is a Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) Priority area, providing opportunities and incentives for landowners to reduce agricultural inputs polluting the river. The increasingly globalised nature of agricultural commodities, volatile farm gate prices, consumer confidence, the increasing costs of fuel and fertiliser and of welfare, hygiene, bio-security and traceability initiatives, together with climatic changes and the opportunities for farmers to act co-operatively, all have implications for the viability of farming. These trends have particularly influenced stock farming, which plays a pivotal role in the maintenance of the Wye Valley's pastoral agricultural landscapes.

8.5.3 Nationally, agriculture accounts for 10% of greenhouse gas emissions and the NFU has set out a plan to get UK agriculture to net zero GHG emissions by 2040. The production of food and fuel are key ecosystem services but must also be socially, economically and environmentally viable. Influences on these include the effects of climate change and the ability to adopt new agricultural practices. Both can impact on the visual quality and landscape character of the area through the use of different technologies, crops, crop production, water & slurry storage and crop protection practices. These could include the use of photovoltaic (PV) arrays, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), new irrigation techniques or plastic crop covers. The latter, either as mulch or polytunnels, can have a dramatic impact on the landscape. Farm-scale polytunnels are not necessarily acceptable in the AONB where conservation and enhancement of the natural and scenic beauty have great weight in planning policy. The potential adverse impacts to landscape, biodiversity, soil and water quality that these changes could bring require effective mitigation and monitoring. However, investment in infrastructure which improves environmental performance, sustainability and conserves and enhances the landscapes should be supported.

8.5.4 The paradox is that many agricultural practices create and support natural beauty, and farmers and rural businesses need to be economically viable so that they can conserve and enhance the landscape, otherwise the businesses and the active environmental land management they underpin, will cease. Farming needs to be able to realise social and economic needs while delivering a whole range of ecosystem services including healthy food, pollination, biodiversity, high landscape quality, high air and water quality, high animal welfare standards, carbon sequestration and opportunities for public recreation and spiritual refreshment. Therefore farmers must be supported for taking a positive role in the land management of a nationally protected landscape. Farmers are already engaged in many initiatives including the Campaign for the Farmed Environment, Catchment Sensitive Farming and agri-environment schemes. Nearly half of the AONB in England is currently covered in

agri-environment agreements. The trend should be to increase the coverage and effectiveness of schemes in the AONB. Thus agricultural practices that conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the area, including biodiversity, and protect environmental resources e.g. soil and carbon storage, water and the River Wye, and take account of the landscape character, should continue to be encouraged as a high priority, for example High Nature Value (HNV) farming. Utilising local markets, environmental grants and reducing costs via smart use of water, energy and nutrients are all important, alongside increasing production and environmental enhancements in resilient, sustainable and low-Green House Gas (GHG) emission systems. Investment in agricultural practices, infrastructure and technology that deliver environment and animal welfare benefits should be supported. Conversely, agricultural activity that significantly diminishes or destroys the natural beauty, landscape character and ecosystem services of the AONB and increases, or does not reduce, GHG emissions should not be supported.

8.5.5 Currently farming in the UK is entering a time of considerable change with Brexit potentially having an impact on market access, welfare standards and future subsidy arrangements and the need to decarbonise processes. It is anticipated that there will be a move towards a system of payment for ‘public goods’ in areas such as environmental and animal welfare standards and incentivising sustainability. Designated landscapes are high value landscape. Targeting information should identify to applicants the specific actions and benefits that agri-environment scheme options can deliver in these designated landscapes. In this way agri-environment schemes will continue to conserve and enhance the features, Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley the AONB. For example, high quality pasture-fed livestock from nature-friendly low input systems has an important place in a low carbon agriculture that conserves and enhances the landscapes, and is very different to intensive livestock rearing on arable-grown feeds. Adoption of agroforestry may restore some historic wood-pasture landscapes and bring more trees into cropland.

8.5.6 There are also the ‘small landowners’, ‘small-holders’ or ‘hobby farmers’ who do not depend on land management for their income. However collectively they are the main private custodians of the distinctive small-field landscapes of the Wye Valley and a disproportionately large amount of the key sites for biodiversity and ecology, as well as a key carbon store. These people often own and manage High Nature Value farmland with semi-natural species rich grasslands and orchards, with traditional field boundaries and practice more traditional forms of farming, such as low intensity grazing and hay-making. They, too, need support and practical help and are often outside the existing agri-environment schemes.

**AONB Aim:** To foster viable farming enterprises that manage the land in ways that conserve and enhance the natural resources and local distinctiveness of the AONB.

**Farming Strategic Objectives**

<b>WV-F1</b>	Encourage farmers and landowners to develop and adopt sustainable management practices that conserve or enhance the features, Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB
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	<i>[see also WV-E2 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-F2</b>	Influence policy on, and encourage the maximum uptake of, agri-environment and other appropriate schemes, including support for small-holders, where they progress the conservation or enhancement of the natural beauty, biodiversity, historic environment and Special Qualities of the AONB, particularly through Catchment Sensitive Farming and mixed farming of resilient, sustainable and low-GHG emission systems <i>[see also WV-P3, WV-P4, WV-P5 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-F3</b>	Identify good agricultural practices that are appropriate to the challenges facing the farmers of the AONB and disseminate through networks, partnerships and training. <i>[see also WV-E2 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-F4</b>	Support the development of and funding for new skills, farming practices and farm-based activities that are compatible with the aims of AONB designation, and encourage and support traditional skills such as hay making, hedge laying, dry stone walling, woodland and coppice management, riparian tree works etc. that contribute to the maintenance of the Special Qualities of the AONB <i>[see also WV-W3, WV-E1 and WV-E3]</i>
<b>WV-F5</b>	Promote a wider understanding of the value of farming to the landscape and economy of the AONB <i>[see also WV-A1]</i>
<b>WV-F6</b>	Support all appropriate measures to control diseases of agricultural crops, trees and livestock, which threaten the commercial viability of farming systems that conserve the landscape character, ensuring that the measures remain compatible with the conservation and enjoyment of natural beauty <i>[see also WV-B4 and WV-W4]</i>
<b>WV-F7</b>	Encourage and support local producers to supply local food and promote and encourage the use of local produce by public bodies, consumers, accommodation providers and local food outlets. <i>[see also WV-E1]</i>

## **8.6 WOODLAND, TREES AND FORESTRY**

8.6.1 Woodlands in the Wye Valley are one of the dominant landscape features with significant connectivity across the landscape. They provide a multitude of ecosystems services and environmental, social and economic benefits. The majority of woodlands in the Wye Valley AONB are ancient woodland of high nature conservation value, and therefore irreplaceable. However there are also sizeable conifer plantations. Forestry and woodland occupies about 26% of the AONB, i.e. about 8440ha. Over

900ha, about 3% of the AONB, are internationally protected as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The highest proportions of ancient and semi-natural woodland (ASNW) and planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS) are in the Wye Gorge, Dean Edge Limestone Hills (Highmeadow) and Woolhope Dome. The woodland proportion varies enormously between Landscape Management Zones. The productive areas of woodland in the AONB are on the flatter land of the Dean and Trellech plateaux and the Woolhope Dome. The majority of the woodland in productive management is in the Public Forest Estate which covers 4,962ha or 15% of the AONB, managed by Forestry England and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). A further 1,650ha of private woodland (5% of the AONB) are in some level of grant scheme. The administrative complexity of the AONB means that there are a range of relevant woodland strategies and plans, for England and Wales respectively.

8.6.2 Britain's trees are under unprecedented threat. Over the last ten years there has been a significant increase in the number of pests and diseases attacking our trees. There are imported pests and diseases creating problems with Ash, Larch, Oak, Pine, Spruce and Horse Chestnut trees. Current threats include Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), Alder Phytophthora (*Phytophthora cambivora alni*) and Ramorum Blight (*Phytophthora ramorum*) all having an effect, some dramatically, on the landscape character of the AONB. Close monitoring and swift remedial action are required to control the worst impacts of these threats. This increase in pests and diseases has dramatically highlighted how dependant we have become on a limited range of tree species. The ancient woodlands of the Wye Valley have a much richer species diversity than plantation woodland. Species and genetic diversification is very much at the core of woodland adaptation and ensuring resilience in the future. Climate change may also significantly affect the Wye Valley woodlands. However their gene pool and extensive connectivity across the landscape may afford some opportunities for species and habitat adaptation and/or migration.

8.6.3 The Wye Valley woodlands would have been managed, predominantly coppiced, on an industrial scale over at least the past 500 years. Much of this would have been low-grade hardwood timber turned into charcoal on site and fed into the local blast furnaces and industrial works along the valley. Currently nationally only 30% of woodlands are managed and the woodlands in the AONB are no exception. This is partly due to volatile timber prices in recent years, making the relatively low-grade hardwoods on the steep slopes of the Wye Valley woodlands particularly unprofitable. The development of modern woodfuel and biomass markets could increase the management of these woods once more. Fluctuating economics will continue to have a variable impact on levels of management as will the level and type of any state aid. But in the meantime many of the woodlands receive little management although they remain a significant carbon sink.

8.6.4 With this lack of active management, however, come a range of problems. The neglect of woodlands has resulted in a general loss of biodiversity particularly those species that are dependent on the cyclic light to shade development in woods. Other problems include invasion by species such as cherry laurel, Himalayan Balsam, increasing deer, boar and grey squirrel populations and the general loss of woodland management skills. Deer populations can have a significant detrimental impact on the economic and conservation value of the Wye Valley woodlands and continued

collaborative management is needed. The Wye Valley Woodland SAC was monitored during the 2013-18 reporting round and found to be in unfavourable condition due largely to the lack of regeneration because of deer browsing. Increases in grey squirrel populations are also recognised as having a significant impact on the longevity of trees such as beech which not only affect the productivity and biodiversity but also the landscape character of the woodlands. However effective control is not so well advanced although the recent pine martin reintroduction may help achieve a better balance. The impact of “wild” boar is still being evaluated. The division of woods and marketing of small individual plots is another trend that needs monitoring.

8.6.5 Employment levels in woodland management in the AONB are uncertain due to the scarcity of comprehensive figures for the AONB. However, there are a wide range of professions locally connected to the woodlands and the use of timber and woodland products. These range from foresters, arboricultural and silvicultural advisors, coppice workers and charcoal makers through stalkers, butchers and game dealers to carpenters, wood turners, joiners and cabinet makers. The viability of the enterprises and markets for woodland produce are essential to ensure the ongoing management of the woodland.

8.6.6 The other significant use and value of the woodlands is for recreation, health and well-being. In Japan, the health benefits of spending time in forests has its own word, *shinrin-yoku*, which means "forest bathing". The heavily wooded nature of the lower Wye Valley is a key factor in the area's popularity as a tourism and recreation destination. The Public Forest Estate in England and Wales (respectively managed by Forestry England & Natural Resources Wales) and Woodland Trust woodlands are open to, and popular with, walkers, with various further promoted and permissive routes for horse riders and cyclists. Similarly most (but not all) Nature Reserves have public access, these are managed by Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, and the respective Wildlife Trusts in Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Gwent. However high levels of recreational use can at times conflict with practical woodland management, such as felling operations or deer & boar culling. The woodland resource also provides good educational and well-being opportunities, particularly through community woodland activity, Forest Schools and the establishment and development of creative and therapeutic initiatives such as the AONB Partnership's InsideOUT and MindSCAPES projects, the 'Woods & Trees' themed Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and the Arborealists' exhibitions.

8.6.7 The woodlands of the Wye Valley therefore require multipurpose management, with sound advice, support and initiatives to secure the benefits for local landscape character and biodiversity and for amenity, health, the local economy and linking or expanding existing sites. Multi-purpose management must still be overarchingly influenced by the need for ecological sustainability, resilience and expansion. Riparian tree corridors and/or wet woodland can help with some flooding issues and be an import resource for watercourse management and biodiversity, but are under threat due to lack of management and tree health related problems. New woodlands and other natural flood management measures would be an important asset in those areas to help with water management. Wherever possible woodlands need to be brought back into management to improve surface viscosity: woodland owners should be encouraged to undertake active and appropriate management of their sites

including the use of coppice management. The only way of increasing the area of ancient woodland with semi natural characteristics is through PAWS restoration. To make the most of these remnants continuous cover forestry (CCF) principles should be the preferred mechanism wherever practicable. It is good practice to change the woodland canopy structure gradually, rather than removing non-native tree species in one go. Bringing former coppice woodland back into management should also be done carefully and gradually; overstood coppice stems are wont to blow over with potentially disastrous results for the stool, if too rapidly exposed. A phased and cyclical approach should be adopted where re-coppicing is appropriate. In some circumstances, encouraging owners to manage glades, gaps and internal edges may be more appropriate, letting some of the former coppice areas return to irregular, mixed species high forest. Heritage features and 'hot-spots' of ancient woodland remnants (including ancient and veteran trees) need to be protected during all forestry operations. Natural regeneration of new trees should be encouraged wherever possible from the rich gene pool of the Wye Valley woodlands, but where replanting (or direct seeding) is necessary 'the right tree in the right place for the right purpose' must be encouraged. Planting stock should be native species of local provenance that have been sourced and grown in the UK and should also be of local origin. This is to foster local character, phenological relationships with other species and also to reduce the risk of importing further pests and diseases.

8.6.8 A key tool in the response to the climate emergency is woodland creation - not only for its carbon storage potential but also in building resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. With 27% woodland cover it could be argued that the Wye Valley should be the paragon and aspiration for much of the rest of the country. Woodland creation in the Wye Valley needs to be carefully targeted to avoid destroying other key carbon stores such as permanent / species-rich grassland. But opportunities to provide improved connectivity, expanding and linking existing woodlands and planting up hedgerows, using appropriate native broadleaved species, is consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. A considerable amount of natural regeneration and/or tree planting will also be needed to replace the Ash trees due to be lost to Ash Dieback.

8.6.9 Single trees and small groups of trees in parkland or in hedgerows also make a significant contribution to the landscape character of the AONB. Such trees are usually of high conservation value, especially ancient / veteran trees which are a scarce ecological niche and resource. They are often part of a link between woodlands or other semi-natural habitats. Individual and hedgerow trees, such as ancient pollards, need appropriate management and maintenance to minimise damage and loss. Ancient trees are living relics of incredible age that inspire in us feelings of awe and mystery, contributing to both biodiversity and cultural history. They are generally of a delicate disposition requiring adequate protection in forest, woodland and hedge operations. Interference should be minimal including that of the roots, to minimise shock. Attempts should not be made to 're-pollard' lapsed pollards as this is often terminal. Arboricultural and preferably Ancient Tree Forum expertise should be referred to as often as possible. An active programme of identifying potential 'new' ancient and veteran trees should be undertaken to fill the generation gap for decaying heartwood and its associated specialists. The impact of Chalara Ash Dieback is likely to result in the loss of large numbers (up to 95%) of woodland, hedgerow and wayside

Ash trees, resulting in potentially noticeable change in landscape and/or woodland character in places. Good practice management principles for ash dieback should be followed, including only felling where there is a material safety risk; a commitment to replace where trees are removed and to replace through natural regeneration, or where planted, from native stock of local provenance that has been sourced and grown in the UK. A seed collection, propagation and planting programme is required to ensure there are mature single and hedgerow trees in the future. We also need to be mindful of not only orchard fragments on the edge of settlements, but also of solitary veteran fruit trees, particularly as they may hold a rare genetic resource.

8.6.9 The Woodlands of the Lower Wye, Origins, History and Management booklet (AONB 2007) - available on [www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk](http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk) - provides useful information on the Wye Valley woodlands.

**AONB Aim:** To ensure woodlands and trees throughout the Wye Valley AONB are managed sustainably in a way that protects and enhances the outstanding ancient woodland character of the area, and provides environmental, social and economic benefits.

### Woodland, Trees and Forestry Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-W1</b>	Provide best practice advice to woodland owners and managers on sustainable multipurpose management of the Wye Valley woodlands, including sensitive PAWS restoration, encouraging ‘the right tree in the right place’ and the ecosystems approach <i>[see also WV-P4, WV-P5 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-W2</b>	Develop and support tree, woodland and forestry initiatives and policy that conserve, restore and/or enhance the Special Qualities, biodiversity and natural beauty of the area, ensuring no net loss of semi-natural woodland cover and better, bigger and more joined up woodland habitats unless there are overriding nature or heritage conservation benefits <i>[see also WV-P3, WV-P4 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-W3</b>	Support the development of employment and skills and markets for local timber and woodland produce <i>[see also WV-F4, WV-E1 and WV-E3]</i>
<b>WV-W4</b>	Support the monitoring, management and where appropriate, control of diseases, pests and other threats, which may cause substantial mortality in tree species and woodland habitats and seek to mitigate the landscape impact of any loss <i>[see also WV-B4, WV-F6 and WV-P8]</i>
<b>WV-W5</b>	Increase understanding, awareness and enjoyment of trees and the special nature of the Wye Valley woodlands and promote them as a resource for appropriate educational, community, recreational and health opportunities <i>[see also WV-A1]</i>

## **THEME 2**

### **9. DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPORT – planning and protection**

This section outlines aims and strategic objectives for planning and development, minerals, utilities, public services, renewable energy and transport infrastructure in the Wye Valley AONB.

#### **9.1 DEVELOPMENT**

9.1.1 The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) does not have direct responsibility for the preparation of land use planning policies nor the determination of planning applications. This is the responsibility of the statutory planning authorities under specific Town and Country Planning legislation.

9.1.2 National policy for AONBs is contained in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and in England in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Local development management policies are set out in the Local Plans, Local Development Plans and emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans and are based on an up-to-date evidence base. The PPW and NPPF provide specific planning guidance for plan makers and decision takers in relation to AONBs and both confirm that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs and that AONBs have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty (equal to National Parks). The ‘great weight test’ (PPW section 6.3.5 and NPPF section 172) is significant and one of the most stringent legal tests that can be applied under planning law. In relation to major development, both PPW (section 6.3.10) and the NPPF (section 172) state that planning permission should be refused for major developments in AONBs except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest, and set a series of 3 tests that have to be assessed. Whether a proposed development is major development, to which NPPF 172 policy applies, is a matter for the relevant decision taker, taking into account the nature, scale and setting of the proposal in question and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated. Elsewhere in the NPPF “major development” is defined by The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, as housing development of 10 or more homes or 0.5 hectares or more, or non-residential development with a floorspace greater than 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or 1 hectare. Both the NPPF and PPW recognise that development affecting AONBs includes impact on the setting of the AONB. NPPF Planning Practice Guidance (Natural Environment - paragraph 041), also states that AONBs are 'unlikely to be suitable areas for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining (non-designated) areas'.

9.1.3 The AONB designation does not prohibit development unnecessarily. Some people may feel that planning legislation and development control is restrictive on



what they want to see developed. However research in Wales showed that nationally 84.5% of planning applications were approved in AONBs (broadly similar to National Parks), compared with 85.3% approved in non-AONB areas. Therefore the process should be seen as a positive process that aims to secure and enhance development that is good enough for the mutual benefit for present and future generations, in an area that is internationally recognised for its landscape importance. Section 2 of the NPPF includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which aims to make decision-making on developments easier. But the footnote to the section (para 11, footnote 6) makes clear that the AONB policies in the NPPF (sections 172) take precedent over this presumption. Consequently proposals must be carefully assessed for their effect on those features and Special Qualities that make the designated area so distinctive. High quality design, including the inclusion of Green Infrastructure, that takes account of landscape character, scale and setting, can help enhance the area. Development that is “good enough to approve” should demonstrate convincing evidence of local need, prioritise affordable housing and follow the ‘National Design Guide, October 2019’ and Welsh Government’s ‘Design’ Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12, March 2016.

9.1.4 All four local planning authorities have adopted Local Development Frameworks or Plans. Local Plans include policy references to the AONB in Core Strategies and in specific Development Plan Documents (DPD) as relevant, and specifically cross-reference this AONB Management Plan. In England, Neighbourhood Development Plans also make reference to the AONB and the Management Plan. This AONB Management Plan therefore forms part of the evidence base and is a material consideration in these documents and the planning process.

9.1.5 There are about 750 planning applications per annum in the AONB (whereas there are over 13,450 dwellings). These range from porch extensions of a few square meters to over 50 hectares of polytunnels. The AONB unit and JAC only tend to consider planning applications that are likely to have a significant impact on the AONB. This is judged to be if the proposed development will form a dominant new feature in the landscape and/or if it damages or impacts on several Special Qualities simultaneously. However the JAC is not a statutory consultee. On average the AONB Manager makes comments on about 1% of applications, usually objecting or raising concern about likely significant detrimental impacts on the AONB. The JAC’s comments are sought on large scale developments when they coincide with the JAC’s meeting cycle, or if deadlines are tight then key members may be consulted.

9.1.6 Many of the planning applications are approved by the local planning authority on the grounds that the development has negligible impact on the AONB. These decisions would take into account current policy and any material considerations, which may include setting a precedent and any cumulative impacts. The range of aspects for which the AONB is important is much more than visual. Natural beauty includes wildlife, geology, heritage, landscape character, scenic beauty, environmental quality and opportunities for enjoyment, and in assessing a planning application the collective impact of these factors needs to be taken into account. Development in the AONB should be a benchmark of excellence for Green Infrastructure, utilising nationally recognised standards such as Building with Nature.

In England Biodiversity Net Gain has the potential to make substantial changes to both biodiversity enhancement and green infrastructure.

9.1.7 However it is a commonly expressed concern that it is often the incremental effect of developments collectively that encroaches on and erodes the landscape features and Special Qualities of the AONB. New development should be proportionate and not overwhelm existing development. In some areas the integrity of the AONB is challenged by incremental and cumulative development, where one poor development is used to justify the next. The Landscape Character Assessments for each county go some way towards addressing these issues along with Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), such as Herefordshire Council's on Polytunnels. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) are an essential tool in the planning process for identifying impacts on landscape character and visual impacts from major developments. The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) includes a chapter on cumulative effects assessment. GLVIA3 should be used for Environmental Statements and may also be useful in relation to smaller scale developments.

9.1.8 Both NPPF and PPW emphasise that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the AONB. In such cases the harm to the landscape resulting from a single development proposal may sometimes be less than substantial, but the 'great weight' attached to the AONB may enable the planning authority to refuse planning permission and to resist incremental or "creeping" change to the character of the area resulting from the cumulative effect of multiple small developments. Such developments might typically include the building of a single dwelling, or an extension to an existing property, or the construction of small business development generating economic benefits. Therefore developments that do not provide any enhancement to the AONB should be resisted. However, the AONB designation should not be seen as a barrier to the right kind of change and new houses need to be built to zero-carbon standards and use low-carbon materials for construction, while existing buildings need to be retrofitted to significantly reduce energy demand. When well designed, these changes can result in significant social, economic and environmental benefits. However, new housing development in surrounding areas may increase recreational and other pressure in the AONB if adequate provision of green infrastructure is not provided locally.

9.1.9 The impacts on the landscape of 'Permitted Development Rights', which can include conversion of agricultural buildings or poorly placed new ones, and some renewable energy and telecommunications installations, is a cause of some public concern. The 2019 Landscapes Review (Glover report) in England noted that "The current Permitted Development Rights (PDR) system should also be reviewed and, if necessary, further PDRs should be added to the list of those currently withdrawn within national landscapes to ensure that the full application process applies before determining planning approval. For example, forestry and agricultural changes allowed under permitted development can have significant impacts on landscape quality". Planning infringements and retrospective applications can also have a detrimental impact locally. Light and noise pollution, and actions such as agricultural improvement of species-rich grassland, removal of hedges or stone walls, hard surfacing of previously unsealed lanes, changes to drainage etc. are also frequently

identified as eroding the character of the area. The level and effectiveness of development management and planning enforcement by the local planning authority is a key factor in controlling this. More effective monitoring of the overall efficacy of the planning system in protecting the AONB designation is required.

9.1.10 There are areas outside of the control of the planning system which can also have an erosive effect or a visual impact on the AONB eg the extensive use of plastic or synthetic mulch. Infrastructure associated with public utilities services and highways are often criticised by people for their standardised approach and lack of attention to local distinctiveness. The duty on all public bodies to have regard for the purposes of AONB designation, in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, can be used to improve the AONB. An example of this is the regulator Ofgem reimbursing the electricity distribution companies for burying underground some of their overhead electricity cables in AONBs.

9.1.11 Dark skies are an intrinsic aspect of the countryside. Light pollution is avoidable through improved design, better enforcement of planning guidelines and innovative new technologies. Lighting should only be installed where and when needed, following guidance and good practice for intrinsically dark landscapes, for example by The Institute of Lighting Professionals. Designs should avoid spilling light including large areas of glazing which can appear as boxes of light in the countryside at night, and glinting glazing in the daytime. Opportunities should be sought to remove or replace existing inappropriate external lighting to restore dark skies. Household, farms, community facilities, recreational facilities and businesses in the AONB can take simple steps to reduce light pollution by:

- Angling existing lights downwards
- Fitting timers
- Replacing existing lighting with designs appropriate for intrinsically dark landscapes.

**AONB Aim:** Ensure all development within the AONB and its setting conserves and enhances the AONB

### Development Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-D1</b>	Ensure a consistent and coherent framework of planning policies relating to the AONB is fully reflected in the statutory land use planning documents and their effectiveness monitored <i>[see also WV-D4 and WV-P4]</i>
<b>WV-D2</b>	Encourage and support high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage, landscaping and Green Infrastructure in all developments, including Permitted Development, to ensure greater sustainability and decarbonisation, and that they complement, conserve and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness including scale and setting and benefit or enhance the natural environment <i>[see also WV-L3, WV-D4, WV-U1, WV-U3, WV-T2, WV-S4 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-D3</b>	Resist inappropriate development which will create a persistent and

	dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the AONB and/or if it damages Special Qualities in the AONB, including through high levels of noise and/or light pollution or any SAC, SPA or Ramsar site or other sites designated as environmentally important <i>[see also WV-L3, WV-U1, WV-U3, WV-T2 and WV-S4]</i>
<b>WV-D4</b>	Encourage the use of Section 106 or Section 38 Agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy to provide opportunities for developments to contribute to enhancing or conserving the natural beauty of the AONB <i>[see also WV-D1, WV-D2 and WV-P4]</i>
<b>WV-D5</b>	Encourage and support public involvement in the future planning of settlements and the countryside throughout the AONB for example through Neighbourhood Development Plans subject to Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) being carried out at appropriate plan or project level as set in the HRA document. <i>[see also WV-C4, WV-P6 and WV-P7]</i>

## 9.2 MINERALS

9.2.1 The geology of the Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire parts of the AONB include considerable quantities of carboniferous limestone. Herefordshire contains more Devonian sandstone and Silurian limestone. These resources have been quarried for centuries to provide building stone, lime for local blast furnaces, agricultural lime and aggregate. As well as stone there is a considerable heritage in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean of mineral extraction, including iron ore, quartz conglomerate for millstones, and coal.

9.2.2 Mineral extraction is now concentrated on limestone aggregate extraction from one large scale quarry in the AONB, at Stowfield Quarry, just west of Coleford, while Clearwell Quarry is adjacent to the AONB boundary. Minerals can only be worked where they occur. However, the environmental impacts of quarries, not only in but adjacent to the AONB, can be considerable. These can be through the long term effect on the landscape and hydrology and/or through the daily operations which can be noisy and dusty and generate considerable lorry traffic. Conversely, quarries provide employment and can be restored to give valuable exposures of the geology, create special habitats for wildlife, as is happening at Livox Quarry south of Tintern, and potentially new recreational facilities.

9.2.3 There are several large disused quarries that are re-vegetating and naturalising over time, and a myriad of small redundant quarries many of which are completely overgrown. All quarries, working and disused, are of value to geoconservation and several are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Local Geological Sites (LGS) - formerly known as Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS). Building stone from local quarries is also important for local architectural and heritage reasons. Historic England and Cadw are keen to see local quarries

temporarily reopened for close stone matches for specific building conservation or renovation permissions.

9.2.4 Government guidance on mineral applications in AONBs is given in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England and in Wales in Planning Policy Wales, Mineral planning guidance and Minerals Technical Advice Note (MTAN) 1, all of which emphasise that minerals development should avoid AONBs (NPPF 205a & PPW 5.14.35). The Minerals Planning Authorities (MPAs) covering the AONB are Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council, responsible for preparing Minerals and Waste Local Plans. Each MPA is responsible for planning for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates in accordance with the NPPF and PPW. All issues such as the impacts of quarrying on environmental constraints will be balanced through the statutory plan process.

**AONB Aim:** Ensure all minerals development in the AONB and its setting is compatible with the purposes of AONB designation

### Minerals Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-M1</b>	Encourage a consistent and coherent framework of mineral planning policies that recognise the AONB and SACs as primary constraints to new quarries and extensions to existing quarries subject to Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) being carried out at appropriate plan or project level as set in the HRA document <i>[see also WV-P4]</i>
<b>WV-M2</b>	Encourage quarries to be operated and restored to a standard that is appropriate to the landscape character, geodiversity and biodiversity of the AONB <i>[see also WV-L3, WV-G3, WV-P4 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-M3</b>	Support the working of building stone where there is a clear need for local conservation and heritage purposes where the scale and nature of extraction is not seriously damaging to the Special Qualities, landscape character or natural beauty of the AONB <i>[see also WV-G3, WV-E1 and WV-P5]</i>

## 9.3 UTILITIES, PUBLIC SERVICES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

9.3.1 The topography of the Wye Valley provides some challenges for the delivery of modern services and utilities. Yet the landscape also offers opportunities and alternatives along with lessons that can be learned from previous generations. The early industries in the Wye Valley were based entirely on the natural resources available and were powered by water and wood. The potential remains to make good use of small-scale hydroelectric schemes on the tributaries of the Wye and of wood fuel. The target for the UK of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 will

necessitate a significant increase in energy generation from renewable sources. Opportunities exist for small domestic wind turbines and for solar power, both for water heating and small-scale photovoltaic electricity generation. Roof mounted PV panels, when framed in a consistent colour, readily fit into the landscape. Agriculture and horticulture also have the ability to provide renewable energy crops. However landscape impacts may occur from large scale changes to crops or ‘solar farms’.

9.3.2 Most public utility services, notably gas, water, electricity and telephone lines tend to follow the road network. Over-ground wires can cross the valleys and the river where they are very conspicuous. The scattered settlement and heavily wooded nature of some parts of the AONB also mean that over-ground connections, particularly telephones and electricity, are disrupted by storms and flooding. The under-grounding of cables is being pursued by the electricity distribution network companies under the Ofgem Section 85 scheme. This can provide both landscape and service supply enhancements.

9.3.3 The rate of consumption of resources is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development. The conservation of energy and water are crucial factors that affect the AONB. Excessive water use and abstraction can have a significant impact on the river, its biodiversity and the surrounding landscape. On-farm water storage is becoming necessary to facilitate irrigation. The waste of resources has both short term and long term effects. For example excessive lighting causes light pollution but also the resultant CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the electricity generation contributes to climate change. The development of renewable energy does not negate the need for efficient use of resources. Similarly national planning policy on waste is to divert waste from landfill and to ‘reduce & reuse & recycle’. This provides opportunities to promote more sustainable alternatives to exporting all waste from the AONB, such as community composting schemes or small-scale energy-from-waste schemes like anaerobic digestion plants.

9.3.4 Mobile phones and Broadband have transformed modern life, but the topography and rurality of the AONB means that coverage is not consistent. In the aspiration to reach comprehensive high speed Broadband and mobile phone coverage, the balance has to be reached so that the valley sides don’t end up bristling with masts to achieve this. Mast sharing is an option but may not always provide the best environmental result in every case, as they tend to need to be taller with each sharing. Masts can use optimum designs or involve innovative solutions, such as incorporation in church towers or farm buildings, which when accompanied by adequate landscaping where appropriate, minimises the landscape impacts in the AONB.

**AONB Aim:** Ensure the most sustainable, effective and efficient use and supply of services and energy within the AONB, compatible with the purposes of AONB designation

### Utilities, Public Services and Energy Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-U1</b>	Support and promote the development of renewable forms of energy generation that do not impact negatively on the landscape features and Special Qualities of the AONB
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	<i>[see also WV-D2, WV-D3 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-U2</b>	Encourage further under-grounding of existing and proposed power and telephone lines, where these do not conflict with any SAC, and resist new overhead lines where skylines or important views are affected <i>[see also WV-D3 and WV-P4]</i>
<b>WV-U3</b>	Encourage the highest standards of equipment design and siting for high-speed broadband and mobile phone installations and resist new structures that either do not share masts and / or do not utilise appropriate designs at suitable locations subject to Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) being carried out at appropriate plan or project level as set in the HRA document <i>[see also WV-D2 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-U4</b>	Encourage the use and supply of resources, including water abstraction and investment in infrastructure, that is consistent with the Special Qualities, SACs, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB, and monitor any adverse impacts <i>[see also WV-L3 and WV-P5]</i>

## 9.4 TRANSPORTATION

9.4.1 The Wye Valley, like almost every other area in the UK, has a dominance of private car use and lorry freight, with nearly 20,000 cars and vans based in the AONB and over 70% of journeys to work taken in a vehicle. This use predominantly concentrates on the two trunk roads in the AONB, the A40 dual carriageway and the A49. The other key routes in the AONB are the A466, A4136, B4224, B4228, B4229 B4234 and B4293, which link the main towns and villages in and around the AONB. There are then a network of smaller rural roads and country lanes that link the scattered settlements and rural businesses. Barely a couple of miles outside the AONB are both the M48 and M50, allowing for a two-way flow of produce, visitors and commuters to and from the conurbations of Birmingham, Bristol and Cardiff, and beyond. Surveys indicate that over 90% of visitors to the AONB come by car. However, while some areas in the AONB reach car and parking capacity at peak periods, other places remain under-used and relatively peaceful with moderately sized car parks retaining spaces virtually all year.

9.4.2 Accessibility to the road network can be an issue, for example due to extreme weather causing landslips, particularly in the lower Wye Valley, flooding or snowdrifts or the closure of the old Severn Bridge. These can have significant knock-on effects for both the landscape and the local economy. The infrastructure associated with maintaining road traffic, and accommodating demand, is controlled primarily by the need to meet requirements of road safety for drivers travelling within the legal speed limits. Sensitively improved transport infrastructure in the AONB can enhance economic development in the area. However recurring signage, lighting and standardised material can have a significant detrimental impact on natural beauty and

local distinctiveness. Road noise is also a factor, affecting tranquillity in some places and quality of life in others.

9.4.3 There are alternatives to the car, beyond the transition to electric vehicles (and their charging infrastructure). Appropriately designed and located development, which includes live-work units and encourages or allows home working, with good links to public transport or cycle routes, can reduce car dependence. Indeed 13% of journeys to work by residents in the AONB are on foot or by bike and another 12% work from home. However, most day-to-day travel options face problems of one sort or another, particularly in such a rural landscape. The local authorities are cutting back funding of the rural bus services. But the willingness of people to use public transport is also strongly influenced by public perceptions, as much as reality, about variable standards in terms of connections, frequency, reliability, access and comfort. The AONB Unit, along with the local authorities, have promoted the use of the local bus services and the network throughout the AONB. However, more could be done, especially following the impacts of Coronavirus on local transport. For many rural businesses and attractions there is no regular local bus service. Demand response buses are popular where they operate, but have proved difficult to sustain when relying on volunteer drivers.

9.4.4 Rail links exist at either end of the AONB at Hereford and Chepstow. These can provide useful staging posts for the non-car traveller. Further afield there are also stations at Abergavenny, Gloucester, Ledbury, Lydney and Newport. The railway line that once did go through the valley was closed to passengers before the Beeching cuts. There are also bus & coach stations in Chepstow, Monmouth, Ross and Hereford which likewise provide access to the area. However frequency of both rail and coach services can be limited to some of these destinations.

9.4.5 The other main alternative is cycling, which is a sustainable and practical means of making journeys, and one of the best forms of exercise. The lower Wye Valley is popular with road cyclists, including being on the Land's End to John O'Groats route. However the A466 is at times and in certain places busy, fast and narrow so can be regarded as quite a dangerous road for less experienced cyclists and drivers. Sustrans Regional Route 423 links Ross-on-Wye with Monmouth, including the off-road sections that are very family friendly of the Town & Country Trail in Ross-on-Wye and the Peregrine Path between Monmouth and Symonds Yat East. A further off-road section is proposed linking Ross with Walford and Kerne Bridge. There were also approved sections of off-road cycleways in the Lower Wye Valley, linking Monmouth to Redbrook and Tintern to Tidenham, but they have not been implemented due to planning and/or funding complications. Other off-road recreational routes have been developed predominantly along bridleways, forest rides and green lanes. More extensive recreational cycle routes exist in the Forest of Dean based on the historic tramroads and railways.

9.4.6 Walking is a popular recreational activity in the AONB but also remains a valid part of most journeys and can be the main form of transport for local journeys. When in good condition, the roadside pavements and the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network can make a considerable contribution to improving the prospects for walkers, and their health. Likewise horse riding and carriage driving makes good use



of the quieter roads and Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network. Historically the river itself was an important transport corridor and the right of navigation on the Wye can still play a role in journeys up and down and across the valley.

9.4.7 The local authorities in England are committed to progressing their respective Local Transport Plans through their Local Enterprise Partnerships and other key national &/or regional stakeholders. In Wales the National Transport Plan is supported by the local authorities and delivery partnerships such as the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority and the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. These are based on the modal hierarchy, which balances the priorities of active travel, walking and cycling, with public transport and private motor vehicles. The challenge, as ever in the AONB, is to secure a consistent and comprehensive approach to achieving sustainable and integrated transport in the AONB. The result should be attractive transport choices for local people and visitors in the Wye Valley that nurtures their health and well-being while providing improved access, social equity and economic opportunities.

9.4.8 Transport corridors should be managed as linear features to act as corridors for wildlife as well as vehicles. Vegetated verges can support a diverse range of rough grassland and scrub species if managed in the right way. Depending on the flowers present, grassland verges may be best cut either once in late summer or twice; in both spring and early autumn. This ensures that tall plants do not cause unnecessary visual obstruction for vehicles, whilst allowing rare and native species to thrive and set seed. It is also desirable to remove the cuttings as this reduces soil nutrients, allowing rare wildflowers that thrive on poor soil to emerge. There are various schemes in each County for registering important roadside verges for biodiversity, usually through the local authority or wildlife trust.

9.4.9 In 2011 the AONB Unit consulted on Highway Design Guidelines for the AONB, in which four Guiding Principles were outlined:

1. Unless there is an overriding safety issue, do as little as possible.
2. Highway improvements should take account of the traffic flow and character of the road to ensure the proposals are not over specified.
3. Unless there is an overriding reason, copy the style and materials that have been used over time
4. Consult with AONB Unit

The informality and apparent 'naturalness' of many of the roads in the AONB is fundamental to the appeal of the area. Any sort of engineering feature, even white lines, detracts from their 'fit' into the landscape.

**AONB Aim:** Ensure transport in the AONB is sustainable and integrated and compatible with the purposes of AONB designation.

### Transportation Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-T1</b>	Encourage and promote greater use of more sustainable and smarter forms of transport in the AONB and for accessing the area, including from railway station, so as to afford modal shift from the car for visitors and residents, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3
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	<i>[see also WV-R1, WV-P3 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-T2</b>	Ensure the design of transport infrastructure and traffic management and control schemes are consistent with the Special Qualities, landscape character and natural beauty of the AONB, and monitor their effectiveness <i>[see also WV-D2, WV-D3 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-T3</b>	Conserve the character of rural roads in the AONB by conserving existing traditional features, reducing excessive signage and lighting and sympathetically managing verges for biodiversity, unless there are proven public safety grounds <i>[see also WV-B3, WV-D2, WV-D3, WV-P3 and WV-P5]</i>

### **THEME 3**

#### **10 VITAL COMMUNITIES - living & working in the AONB**

This section outlines aims and strategic objectives for community development and the economy and rural regeneration in the Wye Valley AONB. Agriculture and forestry, while being a traditional part of the local economy have been covered under the Unique Landscape section due to the dominant influence these industries have on the landscape and land use of the AONB. Tourism also makes a significant contribution to the vitality of the local economy, but is dealt with under the next section: Enjoying the AONB.

##### **10.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

10.1.1 There are 33 Parish and Town Councils on the English side and 7 Town or Community Councils on the Welsh side wholly or partially in the Wye Valley AONB. They have a duty, under section 85 of the CRoW Act, to have regard to the purposes of the AONB. There is frequently more than one village within each of the Town, Parish or Community Councils. Each village or settlement has its own identity, residents and facilities. Many also have their own traditions and celebrations. These give distinctiveness and unique cultural aspects to the local communities and reinforce local community life. However it must be recognised that individuals usually belong to a multitude of ‘communities’, for example by being members of the local church, on the Parish Council, users of the local pub and/or shop, local business people, parents at the local school, part of a neighbourhood watch scheme, sports club etc.

10.1.2 The statistics for the socio-economic makeup of the AONB, based on the 2011 census, are outlined in the State of the AONB Report. The age profile of the local population in the AONB is slightly older than the national average. From this it can be inferred that the Wye Valley AONB is a popular place for retired people, which is likely to put pressure on local housing and the availability of affordable housing for younger people. Thus the effects of rural disadvantage, social exclusion and lack of

affordable housing may affect a significant fraction of households in and around the AONB.

10.1.3 As a predominantly rural area people in the Wye Valley AONB encounter many of the problems familiar throughout rural Britain. The viability of village shops, pubs and local public transport depends on continued support from all sectors of the local community. Additionally however, local wages are lower than the national average yet the area is popular for retirement, second homes and for commuting to Birmingham, Bristol or Cardiff. Nearly 60% of the working population of the AONB are in professional or skilled occupations. Therefore the cost of housing can prevent local people from being able to continue to live in the area. This has been compounded with the scarcity of affordable housing, the increase in second homes and the use of houses as holiday lets. Meanwhile, access to jobs may also be more difficult for some people where public transport provision is not comprehensive.

10.1.4 Decarbonising rural communities is also a significant challenge where people rely on old and thermally inefficient buildings and off-grid coal or heating oil and/or may suffer from fuel poverty. There is also often a reliance on independent transport with poor infrastructure. However, decarbonisation offers opportunities to strengthen or create vibrant local communities. These may be through shared initiatives that generate energy locally and/or increase energy efficiency. Both can create or enhance local support networks and consolidate employment.

10.1.5 People are naturally wary of change if it might affect their way of life. But everybody in every community needs to understand the size of the climate and environmental challenges ahead and how they can take a part in meeting it. A Charter for Residents and Visitors is included in this Management Plan with actions that all residents, visitors and businesses can take to help care for this internationally important protected designated landscape. There are a range of opportunities that can be embraced for a more sustainable quality of life in the AONB. For example energy efficient village halls can host post offices and local cinema clubs as well as their usual wide range of activities. Many local shops and food outlets sell more local produce which helps re-connect people in local communities with the surrounding farmland. Farmers Markets and organic vegetable box schemes have already enhanced and widened this linkage and appreciation for some. The community links with woodland produce need to be developed further. There are several renewable energy options appropriate to the Wye Valley with various incentives and grants available for schemes in housing, shops, farms, schools and other groups within communities. The need for sustainable integrated transport is also recognised.

10.1.6 Communities need actively to identify what they value in their locality and participate in setting priorities for its sustainable management. This may include supporting local / cultural distinctiveness and the Welsh language or local accents and dialects. Commitment by local people to the protection of, and pride in, the Wye Valley is strong. Parish, Community and Neighbourhood Development Plans, as well as the AONB Management Plan, provide fresh opportunities to express these priorities and commitments. Involvement of young people, schools, and the elderly and less vociferous members of local communities needs to be included in these processes as well as the participation of the Town, Parish and Community Councils

and other local representative and resident organisations. Where appropriate a special effort should be made to include part-time residents, letting them know that their views are welcomed and respected, and the skills and experience they might bring to the community is valued. The outcomes then need to be developed into a coherent plan with close liaison with the local authorities and other statutory and voluntary organisations.

**AONB Aim:** To engender thriving local communities which have a high quality of life with a healthy economy that supports the natural beauty of the area.

### Community Development Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-C1</b>	Encourage community led initiatives that maintain the diversity, sustainability and quality of rural community life and/or that stimulate investment, local employment, decarbonisation and retain or improve facilities and services for local people, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3 <i>[see also WV-P3, WV-P5 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-C2</b>	Promote awareness, appreciation of, and pride in the lower Wye Valley, the Special Qualities and features of the Wye Valley AONB and the beneficial aspects for local people of living and working in a nationally protected landscape <i>[see also WV-A1 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-C3</b>	Support the development of affordable housing appropriate to local need in the AONB, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3 subject to Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) being carried out at appropriate plan or project level as set in the HRA document <i>[see also WV-L3 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-C4</b>	Encourage and promote local community plans and strategies to contain coherent objectives relating to the protection, conservation, enhancement and management of the AONB and monitor their effectiveness <i>[see also WV-D5 and WV-P6]</i>

## 10.2 ECONOMY AND RURAL REGENERATION

10.2.1 The economy plays an important role in the maintenance of an attractive countryside. However, economic growth at all costs is unlikely to contribute towards net zero carbon emissions and nature recovery while exacerbating pressures on the AONB. The AONB landscape and the designation itself are an economic asset which can yield returns many times higher than the cost of its conservation and enhancement. The vitality of the AONB is dependent on the contribution of a vast range of businesses beyond the obvious land uses of agriculture, horticulture, forestry and mineral extraction. There is also employment in leisure and tourism, retail, energy

production, light industrial, offices and storage plus other providers such as nursing homes, schools, art galleries etc. In total over 14,270 of the residents of the AONB are in employment. There are also locations within and adjacent to the AONB where manufacturing development, for example of clean, high technology industry, are situated. The natural services and materials provided by the environment are essential for many of these businesses. Taking a natural capital approach will allow businesses to more fully consider the wider supply chain upstream (what their suppliers' dependencies and impacts are on natural capital) and downstream (what positive and negative impacts do the enterprises have on customers and communities). The best businesses understand the value to be gained from managing resource and supply chain impacts on the natural capital. They also know the risks to their brand image, security of resources and their bottom line if they do not.

10.2.2 The strength of the rural economy is also a critical factor in combating rural disadvantage and social exclusion, as well as making a major contribution to the national economies of England and Wales. For example the role of the horse in the local economy covers the full spectrum from local grazing, vets, saddlers and livery through local equestrian events to the activities of Chepstow racecourse and the training of national winners.

10.2.3 Given the proximity of towns and cities to the AONB the economy cannot be expected to be at all self-contained. This also applies to people within the AONB spending their money outside it. The city of Hereford and market towns of Chepstow, Coleford and Monmouth surrounding the AONB, and Ross-on-Wye largely in the AONB are the focus for much of the area's economic and social life. These towns still provide significant local services, although there are considerable competitive pressures from the facilities of Bristol, Birmingham, Cardiff, Cheltenham and Gloucester.

10.2.4 Farming, forestry and quarrying have already been covered in earlier sections and tourism is covered in the next section. However the diversity of businesses makes for a mixed and viable rural economy and all the businesses and enterprises operating in or relying on the resources of the AONB are important for the environmental, social and economic well-being of the area. Similarly people need to recognise that a high quality environment is a key factor in both attracting new rural entrepreneurs and relocating businesses and retaining and attracting inward investment and skilled personnel. The accommodation of sensitive growth in the AONB shows that the designation can be an enabler of high quality development and enterprise.

10.2.5 The economic disruption caused by the UK's exit from the European Union and the Coronavirus Pandemic are likely to have significant but uncertain effects on the economy at global, national and local scales. If a major recession results, this will be in the context of the existing climate and environment emergency and the social emergency of the pandemic, which all have serious implications for rural regeneration.

**AONB Aim:** To foster viable rural enterprises that derive benefit from and enhance the natural resources and local distinctiveness of the AONB

## Economy and Rural Regeneration Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-E1</b>	Support initiatives that improve the market for products which conserve or enhance the AONB’s distinctive landscape, Special Qualities and strengthens the sense of place of the AONB <i>[see also WV-F7, WV-W3, WV-M3 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-E2</b>	Raise awareness of good practice and encourage local businesses in the AONB to take opportunities to become more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, particularly in ways that sustain the natural beauty of the area <i>[see also WV-F1, WV-F3, WV-P5 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-E3</b>	Support the delivery of local co-operative schemes, advice and training programmes that support the development and expansion of rural micro-businesses, subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3 <i>[see also WV-F4, WV-W3 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-E4</b>	Raise awareness of the value of the AONB and the importance of retaining a high quality environment in attracting and retaining entrepreneurs, relocating businesses, inward investment and skilled personnel <i>[see also WV-A1 and WV-P7]</i>

## **THEME 4**

### **11. ENJOYING THE AONB - sustainable tourism, recreation and appreciation**

This section outlines strategic objectives for sustainable tourism; recreation and access; and understanding and appreciation in the Wye Valley AONB.

#### **11.1 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

11.1.1 The Wye Valley is one of the few inland rural areas with its own tourism heritage, dating back over 250 years. Indeed the Wye Valley is arguably the birthplace of British tourism, with the introduction of the Wye Tour in the 1700s made popular in 1770 by Reverend William Gilpin. Some of Britain’s finest artists and writers of the time, including Turner, Coleridge and Wordsworth, came to make the Wye Tour and the associated Picturesque Movement, highly fashionable. The Tour highlighted the dramatic natural scenery, historic monuments and the intense industrial activity of the time. People went on the Wye Tour in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to experience and appreciate the sublime and picturesque qualities of the Wye Valley. To a large extent the desires are the same today for visitors to the AONB. The Wye Valley continues to offer a great range of opportunities for enjoyment and appreciation of the tranquil and spectacular scenery and the features of the historic

environment. These include activities as diverse as day-tripper sightseeing, canoeing, climbing, fishing, walking and cycling. Many are inspired to share their experiences through social media and photography. Thus it remains nationally renowned as a destination for tourism and recreation in an outstandingly beautiful landscape.

11.1.2 Visitor numbers in the Wye Valley AONB were calculated at 1.58million tourists per annum (STEAM 2013), enjoying 2.3 million tourist days per annum, with over 1.3million being day visitors. They arrive in over 300,000 vehicles but also spend nearly £134million in the local economy. The value of tourism to the local economy is therefore significant; both in terms of direct spend (over £100million) and indirect spend (over £33million) and supporting over 2,250 full-time equivalent jobs. However 44% of spend came from visitors staying in non-serviced accommodation (self-catering, caravan, camping etc.) compared to 29% of spend coming from day visitors. In 2019/20 over 12,380 visitors stayed in the two Youth Hostel Association (YHA) centres, at Welsh Bicknor and St Briavels Castle. Most were domestic visitors but nearly half were under 26.

11.1.3 The importance and vulnerability of tourism was highlighted during the foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001 when a wide range of businesses were seriously affected and to a lesser extent during recent wet summers. Visit Britain data suggests that UK tourism spending has been growing steadily since the recession in 2008-9, but dipped in 2018. Tourists now expect value and an authentic experience (as well as wi-fi...or a digital detox). Shifts in consumer behaviour have speeded up trends that were emerging pre Covid-19 (e.g. awareness of travel's impact on the planet, sustainability and decarbonisation, a focus on wellbeing and "mindfulness" etc.). Low-impact, outdoor holidays are likely to increase alongside demand for locally-sourced produce demonstrating local supply chains. Many visitors seek 'memory making' trips and 'authentic' experiences, which can be redolent in the Wye Valley. Trends such as late booking and discounting is reducing margins for many businesses. Rising costs generally are also exacerbating competitiveness. There are also huge challenges for reaching net zero carbon emissions which will mean structural change in the tourism industry as in every other part of the economy. There are however growth opportunities in expanded domestic markets and high-quality sustainable tourism products.

11.1.4 It has to be recognised that the majority of tourism businesses are very small scale. The accommodation sector is made up of a large number of generally small enterprises, with caravan and camping/glamping sites contributing very significantly to the bed spaces for the area (but consequently vulnerable to poor weather). Therefore the 'industry' is composed of a multitude of potentially competing small enterprises and somewhat weather dependant.

11.1.5 Visitor surveys consistently identify that the landscape of the Wye Valley is the most important factor in the decision to visit the area. However the rich cultural and industrial heritage and the valley's long history as a visitor destination and place of creative inspiration are also notable factors. Many features of the Wye Tour survive as important elements of the visitor experience in the Wye Valley today, not least journeying down the Wye by boat/canoe. Especially iconic are Goodrich Castle, Tintern Abbey, Chepstow Castle and the range of popular viewpoints. There are a

small number of other visitor attractions along with the canoe hire companies and river cruises on the Wye from Symonds Yat East and West.

11.1.6 Many of the tourism businesses in the Wye Valley work together through local associations such as Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association, Visit Monmouthshire and Visit Herefordshire. Destination priorities are identified in their respective Destination Management Plans. The Wye Valley AONB spans the two countries and their respective agencies are Visit England and Visit Wales. The three main county based tourism campaigns have all used the Wye Valley brand name, namely; ‘Visit Herefordshire and the Wye Valley’ in Herefordshire, ‘Visit Wye Valley and Vale of Usk’ in Monmouthshire, and ‘Wye Valley and Forest of Dean’ in the Forest of Dean. The AONB Partnership has been a key player in maintaining sufficient cross border co-ordination and collaboration to drive the promotion of the Wye Valley as a destination in its own right, particularly for sustainable tourism.

11.1.7 Key elements that make tourism more sustainable in the Wye Valley AONB include visitors staying in the locality rather than using it as a touring base, using local products and spending time getting to know local heritage, communities, ways of life, etc. The Charter for Residents and Visitors included in this Management Plan has actions that all residents, visitors and businesses can take to help care for this internationally important protected designated landscape.

**AONB Aim:** Sustainable tourism based upon the natural beauty and local distinctiveness of the AONB continues to enrich the lives of visitors, operators and employees while contributing positively to the conservation and enhancement of the area

### Sustainable Tourism Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-S1</b>	Encourage and promote the AONB as a sustainable tourism destination with forms of tourism activity and development that are based on the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Special Qualities and features of the AONB subject to Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) being carried out at appropriate plan or project level as set in the HRA document <i>[see also WV-P5 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-S2</b>	Promote the improvement of the visitor experience, particularly at the most heavily visited sites, and facilitate the opportunity for visitors to explore and discover other appropriate but less used locations throughout the AONB, thus spreading demand and balancing pressures across sites where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs <i>[see also WV-A1, WV-P3 and WV-P7]</i>
<b>WV-S3</b>	Ensure adequate provision of co-ordinated tourism data and visitor engagement to inform strategic and practical decision making on conserving or enhancing the Special Qualities of the AONB <i>[see also WV-P8]</i>



<p><b>WV-S4</b></p>	<p>Encourage the mitigation and/or reduction of the adverse impacts of existing tourism activity and attractions, particularly where they are concentrated around certain locations or sites, and/or those that fall outside the aims of conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Special Qualities and features of the AONB and decarbonisation. Highest priority will be given to addressing the issues in the Symonds Yat and Tintern areas  <i>[see also WV-L3, WV-D2 and WV-D3]</i></p>
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## 11.2 RECREATION & ACCESS

11.2.1 Recreation is a major activity in the AONB, both socially and economically. Most fly-fishermen in the country will have fished on the Wye, most canoeists learned to run rapids at Symonds Yat. Many rock climbers will have climbed in the Wye Gorge. Many coach tours have visited Tintern Abbey. Many walkers will have trodden on the Wye Valley Walk and the Offa’s Dyke Path National Trail. Many cyclists pedalling from Land’s End to John O’Groats will have travelled up the A466. Many artists and photographers will have captured the mist floating in the Valley. All these people will have enjoyed the fresh air, the picturesque and sublime natural beauty and the historic features of the AONB, either consciously or subconsciously. This is a primary element of the visitor experience. Significant health benefits and social opportunities are also gained through these recreational activities. There is a need to ensure that all people in society have access to the benefits offered by the area along with sufficient resources to manage and maintain that access. Thus the Wye Valley AONB should continue to be a place where residents and visitors alike enjoy activities that result in the enjoyment of the countryside and the Special Qualities of the AONB.

11.2.2 The health and economic benefits of access and recreation are important. But there are conflicts, real and perceived, between some types of activities, for example between canoeists and fishermen on the river, and variously between walkers, horse riders, various types of cyclists and trail motorcycle riders and 4x4 drivers on Public Rights of Way (some CR-F and CR-B, BOATs and public unsealed County Roads). Specific issues emerge with the popularity of some paths and trails and sections of riverbank where users can cause severe erosion from over use. Overuse is also a problem to the nature conservation value of the area, particularly where European designated species and habitats are. Conflict sometimes emerges when there is confusion over signage and rights of access. Where public access is provided, private landowners often incur costs in maintaining the public service of that provision. When dialogue can be entered into between the various interests and users, invariably a consensus can be reached and positive solutions progressed. It is often the case that recreational users have a high appreciation of the Wye Valley (although not necessarily that it is an AONB) but not such a high appreciation of the needs of landowners and other users, nor of the impacts of their activity on other users and the area. In cases of severe conflict an appropriate authority may consider regulation of

an activity through the use of banning, licensing or zoning. However, lawful users should not be penalised because of clearly illegal activities by others. For example providing for small scale low impact wild camping should not be confused with unauthorised, noisy or messy rogue camping. The provision of facilities for minority groups needs careful consideration by appropriate authorities and providers. But this should be on a wider basis than just within the AONB. Similarly public access needs to adapt and modernise to meet the needs of the 21st century user. The Coronavirus pandemic and consequent travel restrictions, combined with fine weather, led to increased recreational pressure and access to the countryside and the river. Increasing demand for housing and access to the natural environment may intensify recreational pressure in future.

11.2.3 Outdoor recreation is extremely dependent on the weather and the natural resources. The impacts of climate change will have implications for access and recreation activities; with hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters and more extreme weather events. The state of the resources determines what kind of activities take place, for example reduced river flows mean people cannot go canoeing or fishing, more landslips and tree-falls will prevent use of some valley-side routes, while extremes of weather will determine when or whether the activity can take place. Decarbonising access and recreation activities, along with journeys to it, will play a part in reaching zero carbon emissions.

11.2.4 There are a range of statutory and voluntary organisations and private individuals with interests in the recreational activities occurring in the AONB. Various bodies and strategies bring these organisations and interests together. On the river the navigation authority for the tidal stretch, demarcated as downstream of Bigsweir Bridge, is the Gloucester Harbour Trustees. Upstream of Bigsweir Bridge the navigation authority is the Environment Agency and the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee which, through the Wye Waterways Plan, takes a leading role in resolving conflicts and defining what activities are acceptable on the river. Some recreational providers have formed associations to help advance their common interest, for example The River Wye Canoe Hire Association. On land each county, under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, has a Local Access Forum (LAF), and a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). However these are based on administrative boundaries and do not cover the AONB as a whole.

11.2.5 The purposes of AONB designation emphasise that the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty takes primacy over the needs of and demand for recreation, which itself should be consistent with the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses of the area. However, there is potential to integrate recreational access and public educational facilities through agri-environmental schemes and ROWIP delivery. Woodlands and forests can play an important role in absorbing tourism and recreation pressure. There are also opportunities to make links to health, equality and well-being strategies. These can all help to both enhance opportunities for everyone and deflect unsustainable visitor pressures away from the AONB honeypots or very sensitive habitats. There are huge benefits that we all get through contact with nature. Recreation in the AONB also helps people to reconnect with nature, recreating a relationship with the natural environment and ensuring fairer access to its goods and services. Recreation also helps our well-being through its positive impact on mental

and physical health, and it improves education, encourages social activity and reduces crime.

**AONB Aim:** People continue to enjoy active recreation in the Wye Valley that does not detract from the natural beauty of the area

### Recreation & Access Strategic Objectives

<b>WV-R1</b>	Encourage and promote recreational pursuits and responsible access compatible with the AONB purposes, particularly linking sustainable transport and town and village facilities. Associated development and new access to land should be subject to WV-D2 and WV-D3 <i>[see also WV-T1, WV-A1 and WV-P3]</i>
<b>WV-R2</b>	Assist the resolving of conflicts, real and perceived, between recreation, conservation and local interests, including other economic activities, and between different recreation interest groups in relation to the purposes of the AONB designation <i>[see also WV-P1 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-R3</b>	Support appropriate levels of sustainable design, repair, signage and maintenance on public rights of way, recreational trails and sites, using materials in keeping, in order to conserve and enhance the character and natural beauty of the AONB <i>[see also WV-P4 and WV-P5]</i>
<b>WV-R4</b>	Assist in identifying gaps in access and recreational provision, including for under-represented and minority groups, and work with appropriate bodies and stakeholders to support and promote access enhancements and improved access for all, where this does not conflict with the Special Qualities of the AONB and the SACs <i>[see also WV-P5, WV-P7 and WV-P8]</i>

## 11.3 UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION

11.3.1 Both residents and visitors in the Wye Valley AONB highly value the scenic beauty. Most of the historic environment and the strong cultural and artistic heritage is founded on the outstanding geology and topography that contributes so significantly to the natural beauty of the area. Many of the local business are either directly or indirectly dependent on the landscape. But some people have little idea what or where the AONB is. Some have nearly lost connection with the natural environment. There is much that can be done to reconnect people and nature and the landscape. Amongst those that do know what or where the AONB is there is still considerable misunderstanding as to the roles and responsibilities in the AONB. This applies to some organisations as well as to individuals. Moreover many people are uncertain about how they could positively contribute to the conservation and enhancement of

the natural beauty of the area. Likewise it is unclear to some people how the AONB positively contributes to people’s lives or businesses. Some may see this purely in terms of a market value. However, while some services of and in the AONB do have a market value, some of which may be calculable through a natural capital approach, others will have a ‘non-use’ value. Non-use value refers to the value that people attach to the environment even if they never have and never will use the environment for recreation or economic gain.

11.3.2 There is a rich legacy of cultural and landscape associations from artists, writers and musicians that can be explored and enjoyed by local people and visitors to gain a strong sense of the landscape and their role in it. Over the recent years, appreciation of how arts and culture can support the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities has grown rapidly. The Special Qualities of the AONB continue to inspire artists, crafts people, writers, musicians, performers and other creative practitioners. Their work in turn develops strong connections between people and the landscape, increasing understanding, appreciation and wellbeing. This can help widen the base of people who care about the landscape and become involved in safeguarding its future. Activities such as the Wye Valley River Festival enable land managers and local communities to work with artists on creative solutions to communicating messages about the area’s natural beauty. A vibrant cultural industry can bring strength to the social fabric and local economy of the AONB.

11.3.3 More effective information is required to increase the overall appreciation of the landscape and the designation, and to engage people more in understanding, contributing to and benefiting from the AONB.

**AONB Aim:** Increase people’s appreciation and understanding of why the area is designated

**Appreciation and Understanding Strategic Objectives**

<b>WV-A1</b>	<p>Increase the profile of the Wye Valley AONB, promoting awareness and understanding of the designation and the Special Qualities of the AONB, through communication with, and interpretation for, residents, visitors, organisations and businesses, including embedding cultural and artistic activities into the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and measure effectiveness</p> <p><i>[See also WV-L5, WV-B6, WV-G4, WV-H3, WV-F5, WV-W5, WV-C2, WV-E4, WV-S2, WV-R1, WV-P5, WV-P6, WV-P7 and WV-P8]</i></p>
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**THEME 5**

**12 ACHIEVING TOGETHER – effective management of the AONB**

**12.1 PARTNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

12.1.1 The current AONB Partnership of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and the AONB Unit, supported by the Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP) and various Topic Groups have proved remarkably effective and resilient. This governance structure offers the benefits of local accountability through elected members and access to specialists with both local and national knowledge, supported by dedicated professional staff. Over the decades since designation these structures have seen significant alterations in AONB status nationally and locally, with Local Government Re-organisations; the development of the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB); regionalisation and de-regionalisation; fresh legislation and the impacts of austerity on public sector funding and agencies. The Wye Valley AONB Unit and JAC have at times been a leading agent in the NAAONB and some of the national and regional developments around these changes. Meanwhile the AONB Partnership has co-ordinated a broad range of practical and strategic achievements in the Wye Valley AONB, variously involving the public, private and voluntary sectors. With the administrative complexity of the AONB, the AONB Partnership is recognised as one of the very few organisations locally with a true cross-border remit. Consequently the AONB Unit and its partnerships have a considerable amount of experience and expertise in cross-border working and project development and delivery at both local and landscape scales.

12.1.2 The AONB Unit is an established team, currently with five core members of staff augmented at times with project staff, trainees and placements depending on resources. The local authorities have commissioned the AONB Partnership to operate as a cross-border co-ordinating body, engaging with local communities and other partners to collaboratively develop and deliver both localised projects and AONB wide initiatives. The AONB Unit staff report to the JAC and are employed through the local authorities and work on behalf of the AONB Partnership to carry out the preparation and review of the Management Plan, to advocate its policies and work in partnership to deliver a range of actions defined in the agreed annual Action Plan. To achieve this the AONB Unit:

- Builds knowledge in order to inform and realise the ambitions of the Management Plan.
- Provides value to partners, providing helpful advocacy, advice and support and leading activity where appropriate.
- Carries out timely, inclusive and authoritative reviews of the AONB Management Plan on behalf of local authorities.
- Leads on the delivery of the AONB Management Plan and generates partnerships and collaboration in support.
- Builds capacity, motivation and professionalism and retains expertise and high quality staff.
- Actively seeks finance and other resources to support the delivery of the Management Plan.

The JAC ensures that the AONB Unit is effective, efficient and authoritative, recognised and valued by partners and policy makers as a professional body delivering significant added value and enabling action on the ground. For example the AONB staff both actively lead project steering groups and contribute to county Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and other fora. The activity of the AONB Unit has complemented economic regeneration initiatives in the area such as LEADER programmes and drawn in project funding from a wide range of sources.

12.1.3 An independent assessment “The Value of AONB partnerships” by Land Use Consultants (LUC 2013) concluded that:-

AONB partnerships

- are embedded within, and trusted by, local communities.
- excel at using small sums of public money to draw extra money and resources into rural communities
- are flexible, adaptable and respond to change
- are helping facilitate new ways of working in the public sector
- work together and recognise the benefits of acting together as a Family

12.1.4 In 2018 the JAC undertook a detailed review of governance processes and structures against the ‘Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes’ as outlined in Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales (2017). The review identified a number of aspects of ‘what we do well’ and 20 recommendations proposed to address the findings of ‘what we could do better’. These did not recommend any significant or radical changes to the governance arrangements but were mostly small and/or administrative changes to procedures. However more resources and capacity are needed to fully deliver all the recommendations. There are governance proposals in the Glover Review which would augment these recommendations if enacted in England.

12.1.5 The pressures on local and central government budgets mean that the AONB Partnership will need to continue to evolve and adapt. This will entail broadening partnerships, particularly with the private and voluntary sectors, levering in more resources from non-governmental sources and aligning projects and the capacity to deliver them accordingly. In Wales particularly, but not exclusively, proposals will also need to deliver benefits under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (WFG) goals of:

- A healthier nation
- A nation of cohesive communities
- A prosperous nation
- A nation of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible nation
- A resilient nation
- A more equal nation

Full engagement with the AONB Partnership will enable public bodies to demonstrate that they are delivering part of their ‘duty of regard for the AONB’ and are in line with the WFG legislation, as they will be working with the long term perspective; with approaches that take an integrated approach; planning to take action now in order to prevent problems occurring or getting worse in future; involving all parts of the community; and collaborating with other organisations in order to achieve these wider benefits.

**AONB Aim:** Continue proactive and imaginative achievements in the Wye Valley AONB through successful and productive partnerships

### **Partnership, Management and Governance Strategic Objectives**

<b>WV-P1</b>	Maintain and develop effective partnerships and administrative arrangements to lead and co-ordinate the management of the AONB and develop the AONB Partnership as an effective forum for initiating and promoting discussion on important issues affecting the AONB <i>[see also WV-R2, WV-P5, WV-P6, WV-P7 and WV-P9]</i>
<b>WV-P2</b>	Sustain and enhance local and national government funding and support for the AONB Unit to add value to delivery of the AONB purposes <i>[see also WV-P3 and WV-P4]</i>
<b>WV-P3</b>	Encourage and assist partners with initiatives that deliver the Management Plan, or other initiatives where the objectives are consistent with the purposes of the AONB designation, and utilise existing resources and seek new resources to implement the AONB Management Plan <i>[see also WV-L1, WV-L2, WV-B1, WV-B2, WV-B3, WV-B4, WV-G1, WV-G2, WV-G3, WV-F2, WV-W2, WV-T1, WV-T3, WV-C1, WV-S2, WV-R1 and WV-P2]</i>
<b>WV-P4</b>	Encourage Section 85 organisations, under the CRoW Act, to have co-ordinated policies to progress the purposes of the AONB designation and to make commitments in their annual business plans to specific delivery contributions that enable the AONB work programme <i>[see also WV-L1, WV-L2, WV-B1, WV-B2, WV-B3, WV-B4, WV-H1, WV-F2, WV-W1, WV-W2, WV-D1, WV-D4, WV-M1, WV-M2, WV-U2, WV-R3 and WV-P2]</i>
<b>WV-P5</b>	Develop and promote the AONB as a model of sustainable development, landscape management, transportation, access and rural regeneration through exemplary initiatives setting standards for other areas <i>[see also WV-L1, WV-L2, WV-B2, WV-B3, WV-G2, WV-H1, WV-F1, WV-F2, WV-F3, WV-W1, WV-W2, WV-D2, WV-M2, WV-M3, WV-U1, WV-U3, WV-U4, WV-T1, WV-T2, WV-T3, WV-C1, WV-C3, WV-E2, WV-E3, WV-S1, WV-R2, WV-R3, WV-R4, WV-A1 and WV-P9]</i>
<b>WV-P6</b>	Inform and engage all relevant interests, especially local communities, in issues and decisions affecting the AONB <i>[see also WV-D5, WV-C4, WV-P1 and WV-P9]</i>
<b>WV-P7</b>	Encourage partners to be champions and ambassadors for the AONB in their contact with other interests, and ensure those interests recognise and consider the Management Plan and AONB work programme when relating to the area <i>[see also WV-L2, WV-B1, WV-G1, WV-H1, WV-F2, WV-W1, WV-D5, WV-C1, WV-C2, WV-E1, WV-E2, WV-S1, WV-S2, WV-R4, WV-A1 and WV-P1]</i>
<b>WV-P8</b>	Develop and co-ordinate the acquisition and analysis of data across the AONB, to inform priority setting, planning, implementation and monitoring of change affecting the natural beauty, including developing a better understanding of the likely impacts of climate change on the landscape of

	the Wye Valley AONB and supporting mitigation and adaption actions <i>[see also WV-L4, WV-B5, WV-G1, WV-H2, WV-W4, WV-S3 and WV-R4]</i>
<b>WV-P9</b>	Share knowledge and skills in protected area management locally, regionally, nationally and globally as appropriate <i>[see also WV-P5 and WV-P6]</i>

## 12.2 A CHARTER FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

We all share a responsibility for protecting and restoring the outstanding natural beauty for ourselves and future generations to enjoy. The following actions are ways that all residents, visitors and businesses can help to deliver this Management Plan and help to care for this internationally important protected landscape. The full Charter is below, followed by a 5 point pledge.

- 12.2.1           **Take pride in the Wye Valley – promote its Special Qualities, Features and places to family, friends and visitors**  
*Promoting what you find special about the Wye Valley is the best way of encouraging commitment and action by others to the area. Discover what geological, ecological, archaeological and historic features are in your area.*
- 12.2.2           **Don't delay in addressing Climate Change**  
*Make climate change a factor in the decisions you make around what you eat, how you travel, and what you buy and use. Talk about climate change with your friends, family and colleagues. And demand that politicians and companies make it easier and cheaper to do the right thing for the climate. Transformation is Essential.*
- 12.2.3           **Buy local products and services from farmers and woodland managers who actively manage their land to benefit the environment**  
*The landscape and wildlife value of the area's woodlands, grasslands, heathlands, hedges and field margins are dependent on traditional management. Money invested in products and services that help support this management is money invested in conserving and enhancing the AONB and its local economy.*
- 12.2.4           **Get out there and enjoy it**  
*Being out and about in such outstandingly natural and beautiful landscapes is good for your health and general well-being, so take full advantage of this asset on your doorstep.*
- 12.2.5           **Respect other users – follow the Countryside Code**  
*Through responsible behaviour we can all use and enjoy the countryside without damaging the enjoyment or livelihoods of others.*



- 12.2.6           **Slow down for people, horses and wildlife**  
*Traffic spoils enjoyment of the Wye Valley for a great many of its residents. Speeding cars kill people, horses and wildlife, and ancient greenways and their rare plants are damaged by inconsiderate driving and parking.*
- 12.2.7           **Manage your land for wildlife**  
*Fields, woodland, paddocks and gardens support valuable and threatened wildlife. A few simple measures and sensitive management can enhance their wildlife value for everyone's benefit.*
- 12.2.8           **Maintain the rural nature of your property**  
*The use of traditional materials and skills, such as drystone walling and hedgelaying, helps retain the AONB's valued rural feel, which is in danger of being gradually eroded through the use of inappropriate and urban materials and features, eg. plant a native hedgerow instead of erecting a fence.*
- 12.2.9           **Help prevent the spread of invasive and harmful plant and animal species**  
*Introduced plant, animal and fish species spread rapidly in the Wye Valley countryside, competing with our native wildlife and leading to its loss. Seek advice from local experts before introducing or planting a non-native species into the local landscape.*
- 12.2.10          **Avoid using the car where possible and consider using renewable energy in your home**  
*Emissions from non-renewable fossil fuels contribute to climate change and lead to degradation of valuable habitats such as bogs and heathland and the possible gradual loss of wildlife and wildflowers such as primroses and bluebells.*
- 12.2.11          **Reduce, reuse and recycle, and dispose of all litter responsibly**  
*Litter spoils enjoyment of the countryside for the majority of residents and can pose a lethal risk for wildlife. Less rubbish also means less pressure for landfill sites and fewer collection vehicles in the AONB.*
- 12.2.12          **Use less water**  
*Demands for water lead to high levels of water extraction from the Wye. This damages the wildlife in the AONB's rivers, streams and wetlands, as well as recreational enjoyment of the Wye.*
- 12.2.13          **Get involved – support local conservation organisations and groups**  
*With your financial and practical support, local conservation organisations can take action to safe-guard the AONB landscape such as monitoring threatened wildlife, undertaking practical conservation tasks and lobbying local and central government.*
- 12.2.14          **Have a say**

*Your views can influence care of the area – use consultation processes operating at Community/Parish/Town, district, county and AONB level to steer policy and action that affects the area. Meanwhile, help report damage to geological, ecological, archaeological and historic features.*

### **12.3 Five Point Pledge**

Sir David Attenborough said “No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced”. The Charter for residents and visitors can be condensed into this five point pledge to take action for nature, people and landscape; discover and explore the Wye Valley; get active; share your experience; get involved and do all you can to conserve and enhance the Wye Valley AONB now and for future generations.:

- Get outside and enjoy your natural health service  
Take a natural prescription and get outside into the landscape - every day.
- Become an active ecological citizen  
Tread lightly and make your footprint(s) count.
- Take pride in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)  
Champion the Wye Valley landscape and discover more about why it is so special.
- Help nature to recover and flourish across the whole landscape  
Improve your local environment for nature.
- Get involved and make your voice heard  
Act now do not delay.

Finally, in 2017, the Centre for Alternative Technology published Zero Carbon Britain: Making it happen. The report states “Climate change is not the root problem but a symptom of our materialistic culture and growing disconnection from nature and from each other. The belief that we are separate from, or even somehow ‘above’ nature, allows continued inaction, even when there is clear evidence that our actions are deeply damaging the habitats of other humans and other species. Our values have a profound effect on our behaviour.”

## 13. MONITORING & METRICS

13.1 A framework of indicators and metrics has been developed by the National Association for AONBs to demonstrate the range and value of work delivered by AONB teams. These metrics are taken as a useful indicator of progress of the AONB Unit in delivering the AONB Management Plan alongside the statistics gathered for the State of the AONB Report. Resources currently do not allow for collation of data from all possible projects by all partners and stakeholders engaged in activity across the Wye Valley AONB.

13.2 The six indicators describe the following areas of work:

- 1) Caring for natural beauty,
- 2) Caring for heritage,
- 3) Engaging with people,
- 4) Power to convene,
- 5) Sustainable development, and
- 6) Value for money.

The first three indicators align closely with the indicator framework developed by DEFRA for reporting progress against the performance of the 25 Year Environment Plan. Where appropriate the link to Management Plan Themes and aims is listed.

1. Caring for natural beauty - Land where natural beauty has been conserved or enhanced through the work of AONB Unit
  - a) Hectares of habitat conserved or enhanced for biodiversity [WV-B]
  - b) Hectares of land conserved for geodiversity [WV-G]
  - c) Hectares of land where the heritage asset condition or setting has been conserved or enhanced [WV-H]
  - d) Hectares of landscape enhanced via the removal of overhead power lines [WV-U]
2. Caring for heritage - Heritage assets where the condition or setting has been conserved or enhanced by the work of AONB Unit
  - a) Number of Scheduled Monuments where the condition or setting has been conserved or enhanced [WV-H]
  - b) Number of other designated sites where the condition or setting has been conserved or enhanced [WV-H]
  - c) Number of non-designated heritage assets where the condition or setting has been conserved or enhanced [WV-H]
3. Engaging with people - People directly engaged through the work of AONB Unit
  - a) Number of volunteers [WV-C]
  - b) Attendance at events convened/ organised by AONB Unit [WV-P]
  - c) Number of young people (<18yo) engaged with via school visits, activities, etc. [WV-A]
  - d) Number of people engaged with via activities linked to the Health & Well-being agenda [WV-C / WV-R / WV-A]
  - e) Number of members of the public engaged with during Management Plan Review [WV-C / WV-P]
  - f) Number of people engaged with via AONB promotional publications –

Newsletter distributions, etc. [WV-C / WV-A]

4. Power to convene - Number of partnerships/ initiatives influenced by the AONB Unit to deliver AONB Management Plan objectives
  - a) Number of partnerships where the AONB Unit is part of the project/team/ steering group lead [WV-L / WV-P]
  - b) Number of partnerships where the AONB Unit is a supporting partner [WV-L / WV-P]
  
5. Sustainable development – Strategies, plans, policy, guidance documents, development and land management schemes appraised or developed by AONB Unit
  - a) Number of strategies, plans, policy or guidance documents appraised or developed by the AONB Unit [WV-L / WV-D / WV-M]
  - b) Number of Major ‘development schemes’ appraised – LPA planning applications [WV-D]
  - c) Number of non-Major ‘development schemes’ appraised – LPA planning applications [WV-D]
  - d) Number of other ‘development schemes’ appraised – Highways, Environment Agency, BT, DNO, private sector, etc [WV-D / WV-U / WV-P]
  - e) Number of National Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) appraised [WV-D]
  - f) Number of ‘land management schemes’ appraised – woodland management, Catchment Sensitive Farming, Countryside Stewardship, Natural Flood Management, etc [WV-F / WV-W]
  
6. Value for money - Total value of work delivered directly or secured by the work of AONB Unit
  - a) Amount of Local Authority funding received (Core funding) [WV-P]
  - b) Amount of non-Local Authority funding received (Core funding) [WV-P]
  - c) Value of other ‘external’ grants or contributions received for projects / noncore activity [WV-P]
  - d) Value of external projects substantially influenced / generated by the AONB Team [WV-L / WV-P]
  - e) Value of volunteer days [WV-P]

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Joint Advisory Committee**

The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) comprises of representatives from the following organisations:

Local Authorities:

- Forest of Dean District Council (2 councillors)
- Gloucestershire County Council (2 councillors)
- Herefordshire Council (4 councillors)
- Monmouthshire County Council (4 councillors)

Co-opted members - umbrella organisations:

- Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC)
- Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC)
- One Voice Wales
- Country Land & Business Association (CLA)
- National Farmers Union (NFU)
- A voluntary conservation sector representative for Gloucestershire
- A voluntary conservation sector representative for Herefordshire
- A voluntary conservation sector representative for Monmouthshire

Non-voting co-opted members:

- A representative of the local Wildlife Trusts,
- Wye Valley Society,
- River Wye Preservation Trust,
- A Recreation interests' representative
- A Tourism interests' representative

The JAC is supported by a Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP), which comprises lead officers from the four local authorities and a range of Government agencies, including:-

- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Forestry England
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Natural Resources Wales

## APPENDIX II

### Acronyms and Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, often specifically used in reference to the Wye Valley AONB
ASNW	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BL	Business Link
Cadw	Cadw
CAMS	Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CC	Chambers of Commerce
CCC	County Community Councils, e.g. Community First in Herefordshire
CFL	County Food Links organisations
CLWS	County local wildlife sites
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
CPRW	Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
CR-B	Carriage or Cart Road used mainly as Bridleway
CR-F	Carriage or Cart Road used mainly as a Footpath
CRoW	Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DCLG	Departments for Communities and Local Government
DI	Deer Initiative
DMGs	Deer Management Groups
DMPs	Destination Management Partnerships
DNO	(electricity) Distribution Network Operators
EA	Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EHT	Earth Heritage Trust, which is the and geoconservation group for Herefordshire and Worcestershire
FC	Forestry Commission
GCR	The Geological Conservation Review
GHG	Green house gas(es)
GIS	Geographical Information System
GLASS	Green Lane Association
HA	Highways Agency
HE	Historic England
HER	Historic Environment Records
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle, eg any lorry or truck over 7.5 tons axle weight
HC	Herefordshire Council
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
HNV	High Nature Value
HWT	Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
JAC	Joint Advisory Committee
LAs	Local Authorities

LA-LCC	Local Authorities – Landscape, Countryside & Conservation services
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LBRCs	Local Biological Records Centres
LMZs	(AONB) Landscape Management Zones
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MPAs	Mineral Planning Authority
MPV	Mechanically Propelled Vehicle
MPC	Mobile phone companies
NAAONB	National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
NE	Natural England
NERC	Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006
NFU	National Farmers Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
NT	National Trust
ODPNT	Offa’s Dyke Path National Trail
PAWS	Planted Ancient Woodland Site
PCTs	Primary Care Trusts
PT&CCs	Parish, Town and Community Councils
PGP	Hewelsfield and St. Briavels Parish Grassland Project
PPW	Planning Policy Wales
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
RDPE	Rural Development Programme England
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites
ROWIP	Rights of Way Improvement Plan
RUG	Recreational user groups
RWPT	River Wye Preservation Trust
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SM	Scheduled Monument
SMNR	Sustainable Management of Natural Resources
SoNaRR	State of Natural Resources Report (in Wales)
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
STEAM	Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor
TLA	three letter acronym
TOWP	Technical Officers’ Working Party
TRF	Trail Riders’ Fellowship
VE	Visit England
VW	Visit Wales
WFGA	Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
WG	Welsh Government
WT	Woodland Trust
WiT	County Wildlife Trusts

WVFTA	Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association
UC	Utilities companies



## APPENDIX III

### Glossary & References

Term used	Definition / Explanation
Affordable Housing	Low cost housing for sale or rent, often from a housing association, provided to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford accommodation through the open market.
Aggregates	Sand and gravel, crushed rock and other bulk materials used in the construction industry for purposes such as making concrete, mortar, asphalt or roadstone, drainage or bulk filling.
Agri-environment Schemes	A range of schemes operated by DEFRA designed to encourage environmentally friendly farming and public enjoyment of the countryside, includes Countryside Stewardship in England and Tir Gofal in Wales.
Alder Phytophthora	A fatal fungal infection of trees believed to be a relatively recent hybrid of fungi <i>Phytophthora cambivora</i> and <i>Phytophthora fragariae</i> , the plant pathogen is capable of inflicting widespread damage to trees in the Alder family.
Alien species.	Plant or animal species that has either been transported accidentally through human activity, or purposefully introduced, from their historically known native ranges into new ecosystems where they did not evolve. Also known as non-indigenous, exotic, invasive or introduced species.
Amenity	The pleasant or normally satisfactory aspects of a location, which contribute to its overall character and the enjoyment of residents or visitors.
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland	An ancient woodland site, believed to have had continuous woodland cover since 1600 AD, composed principally of native tree species that have not obviously been planted.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Area designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, with the primary purpose of designation being to conserve natural beauty.
Area Statements	The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires these be produced to facilitate the implementation of Welsh Government's the Natural Resources Policy. In doing so they will address the national challenges, opportunities and priorities in the area and apply the principles of SMNR. Area Statements will provide information about the natural resources in the area, and the benefits they provide. When produced, the South East Wales Area Statement will provide a useful context for the AONB Management Plan and provide valuable evidence of the important ecosystem services of the Welsh part of the AONB.
Biodiversity	The common term for "biological diversity", the variety of life and the natural processes of which living things are a part. The term includes living organisms, the genetic differences between them and the communities in which they occur.
Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs)	A plan, programme or strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Biodiversity Action Plans are a key means by which the UK Government commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity at Rio de Janeiro (1992) is to be met.
bio-fuels	currently methane, alcohols and biodiesel, all of which may be made from sustainable agricultural crops, producing valuable by-products
Bridleway	A public right of way for walkers and those on horseback, or leading a horse, together with permission by parliament for use by pedal bicyclists, provided they give way to walkers and horse riders. A bridleway may also have higher rights (see Public Rights of Way)
Broadleaved Trees	Trees belonging to the botanical group Angiospermae, carrying broad leaves, which usually shed all their foliage at the end of the growing season. Also known as deciduous or hardwood trees.
Browsing	A method of feeding by herbivores in which the leaves and peripheral shots are removed from trees and shrubs.
Buffer Zone	The region near the border of a protected area providing a zone of transition between

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
	areas managed for different objectives.
Byway	A Byway open to all traffic (BOAT) is a Public Right of Way open to all users.
Carboniferous Limestone	Carboniferous Limestone was laid down in clear tropical seas and the overlying Coal Measures deposited on land in equatorial regions.
Carrying Capacity	Attempts made to measure the maximum amount of use that a resource can accommodate. Ecological capacity is the maximum level of use consistent with no reduction in the valued ecological attributes of an area; Physical capacity is the maximum level of use that can be accommodated in space or time; Perceptual capacity refers to the point at which enjoyment falls due to feelings of overcrowding. Burton (1974).
Catchment Abstraction Management Plans (CAMs)	Implemented by Environment Agency since 2001 for every catchment in England and Wales to provide both a consistent approach to local water resource management and greater public involvement in water management.
Climate change	The anticipated impact of modern human activity on the global environment leading to an estimated 3 –8 degree centigrade rise in temperatures in the UK over the next 100 years, with additional environmental consequences.
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)	European Union wide policy that supports agriculture through price support, market management and measures to improve the agriculture industry. Undergoing a Mid-term review, introducing decoupling and more modulation and cross compliance.
Common Land	Defined in section 22 of the Commons Registration Act 1965 as land subject to rights of common (as defined in this Act) whether those rights are exercisable at all times or only during limited periods
Community Strategy	Defined in the Local Government Act 2000 as provision of a new duty and responsibility for Local Authorities to work closely with others to improve the local quality of life and promote well-being. A Community Strategy links the work of key stakeholders in a Local Authority area across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.
condition monitoring	Monitoring condition of the AONB to assess changes over time. Differs from performance monitoring that monitors completion of actions etc within the plan
Coniferous Woodland	Wooded land on which more than 75% of the tree crown cover consists of coniferous species.
Conservation	The management of the human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to current generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations: Thus conservation is positive; embracing preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilisation, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment.
Conservation Area	Defined by section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.
Coppice	Woodland which has normally been regenerated from shoots formed at the cut stumps of the previous crop trees, root suckers, or both i.e. by vegetative means. Coppice is normally grown on a short rotation i.e. 5 – 25 years to yield small diameter material.
County Road	General purpose highways on ‘List of Streets’ maintained by the Highway Authority (usually the County Council's Highways department), includes minor roads and some not sealed or actively maintained.
Countryside	The term used for all land outside the built-up area boundaries defined in local plans. The rural environment and its associated communities.
Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000)	Contains measures to improve public access to the open countryside and registered common land while recognising the legitimate interests of those who own and manage the land concerned; it amends the law relating to rights of way; it amends the law relating to nature conservation by strengthening protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest including tougher penalties and by providing extra powers for the prosecution of wildlife crime; it provides a basis for the conservation of biological

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
	diversity; and it provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including the requirement for local authorities to produce AONB management plans every five years and places a duty on public bodies to have regard to the purposes of AONB designation.
Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS)	An agri-environment scheme administered by DEFRA, which enabled farmers and land managers to enter ten-year management agreements to maintain or enhance certain landscapes and features. Replaced by Environmental Stewardship in 2005
Cross Compliance	The linking of a farmer's eligibility for agricultural subsidies to environmental conditions and good farming practice.
Decoupling	Breaking the link between farm subsidies and production to reconnect farmers to their markets, reduce damaging environmental impacts and cut red tape.
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	Central government body with the aim of sustainable development, which means a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come, including: a better environment at home and internationally, and sustainable use of natural resources; economic prosperity through sustainable farming, fishing, food, water and other industries that meet consumers' requirements; thriving economies and communities in rural areas and a countryside for all to enjoy.
Entry Level Scheme (ELS),	Agri-environment scheme introduced in 2005 with the aim to encourage a large number of farmers across a wide area of farmland to deliver simple yet effective environmental management.
Environmental Impact Assessment	Defined under the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, where developers are required to provide in addition to a planning application, an environmental statement, evaluating the likely environmental impact of the development, together with an assessment on how impacts may be mitigated.
Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)	Operated from 1987 to 2005 offering incentives to encourage farmers to adopt agricultural practices, which would safeguard and enhance parts of the country of particularly high landscape, wildlife or historic value. There were 22 ESAs in England, covering some 10% of agricultural land. The Wye Valley was not an ESA. Replaced by Environmental Stewardship.
Erosion	It is the act or operation in which soil or rock at the earth's surface is worn away (weathered) by the chemical or mechanical action of water, wind or man. It can also refer to a gradual process of removing something which can be accelerated by human activity.
Europarc	The Europarc Federation is the representative body of Europe's Protected Areas. It is a network dedicated to improving the management of Protected Areas in Europe through international cooperation, exchange of ideas and experience, and by influencing policy.
Food Miles	The distance food travels from farm to plate.
Footpath	A public right of way for walkers, which may also have higher rights (see Public Rights of Way)
Forest	An extensive track of land covered mainly with trees and undergrowth, sometimes intermingled with pasture.
Forest Schools	Forest Schools take place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world. They offer learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. <a href="http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/">http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/</a>
Fragmentation	The breaking-up of continuous tracts of ecosystems, reducing the size of homogenous areas and creating barriers to the migration or dispersal of organisms.
General Permitted Development Order	The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 grants rights to carry out certain limited forms of development without the need to make an application for planning permission (the thresholds for GDP are generally smaller in AONBs).
Genetically Modified Organism (GMOs)	The modification of the genetic characteristics of a plant or animal by the insertion of a gene or modified gene from another variety or species.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
Geodiversity	Geodiversity is a term for the non-biological aspects of nature. Geodiversity may be defined as the natural range (diversity) of geological features (rocks, sediments, minerals, fossils, structures), geomorphological features (landforms and physical processes) and soil features that make up the landscape. Geodiversity underpins and shapes the topography and determines the use that can be made of the land and the plants and animals which will thrive there.
Geographical Information System. (GIS)	Computer based systems for managing, analysis and presenting geographically referenced data.
Geomorphology	The branch of physical geography which deals with the form of the earth, the general configuration of its surface and the distribution of land and water etc. together with the natural processes that contribute to the evolution of landscapes.
Grassland	Any plant community in which grasses and/or legumes comprise the dominant vegetation.
Grazier	Commoners who exercise their right to ‘common of pasture’ turning their stock onto a common to graze, and/or grazing undertaken by the landowners own or landowners’ nominee stock.
Grazing	A method of feeding by herbivores characterised by the repeated removal of only a part (usually the leaf) of the plant (most commonly herbage such as grass and clovers).
green	Often used instead of ‘sustainable’ but implies something different in terms of ‘green’ tourism, which is concerned with the environment as an attraction rather than ‘sustainable’ tourism that considers the environment, economy and social impact of tourism on an area.
Green Lane	A term with no legal definition which is often used to describe routes, normally bounded by walls or hedges, which appear to have no ‘sealed’ surface i.e. macadam or concrete, irrespective of whether they are rights of way or entirely private.
Habitat	A place in which a particular plant or animal lives, or the wider interaction of plants and animals that are found together.
Heath	A tract of uncultivated, generally nutrient poor land, with an open character, whose vegetation is dominated by dwarf shrubs, most typically belonging to the family Ericaceae – Heathers. Depending on levels of moisture heaths are further subdivided as dry heath, heather moor and moss-moor. Heath under 300 metres above sea level is referred to as Lowland Heath.
Hedgerow	Lines of trees and/or shrubs which delineate the boundaries of fields.
Heritage	Historic or cultural associations.
Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Agri-environment scheme introduced in 2005 to concentrate on the more complex types of management needed to achieve the objectives of the ELS where land managers need advice and support, where agreements need to be tailored to local circumstances and where management needs to be carefully targeted.
Highway	Any way over which the public have a right to pass and repass, including footpath, bridleway, restricted byway and carriageway.
Highway Authority	The Highways Act 1980 defines a Highway Authority as the body responsible for maintaining all highways maintainable at public expense and keeping them free of obstruction, including responsibility for public rights of way. The Highway Authorities in the Wye Valley are Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire County Councils.
Historic Environment Records	Former ‘Sites & Monuments Records, now incorporate information relating to all heritage assets within a local authority area. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 definition is a useful summary: <a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/4/section/35">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/4/section/35</a> .
Historic Parks and Gardens	Parks and Gardens containing historic features dating from 1939 or earlier and registered by Cadw or Historic England in three grades as with historic buildings.
Honeypot Site	Features or facilities which attract significant numbers of visitors through their reputation or position.
Infrastructure	Anything, whether buildings, apparatus or services, essential to the development and

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
	use of land. Planning permission can be withheld if infrastructure required by a development is not provided, including infrastructure needs arising outside the proposed site.
Interpretation	Interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information. It is the art of explaining the place of man in his environment, to increase visitor or public awareness of this relationship and to awaken a desire to contribute to environmental conservation.
InsideOUT	
LandMap	The Welsh GIS based approach to landscape character assessment; where qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated into a nationally consistent data set. Information is collected in a structured way defined by five methodological chapters; the Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual & Sensory, Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape. Giving all five layers equal consideration ensures no aspect of the landscape is overlooked and promotes sustainable landscape decision-making.
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.
Landscape Assessment	Non statutory document setting out the special qualities of the landscape, tracing its evolution and forces for change
Landscape Character	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from one another, rather than better or worse.
Landscape Character Area	Are unique individual geographical areas in which landscape types occur, which share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type but have their own particular identity.
Landscape Character Assessment	Is a method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and features i.e. woodlands, hedgerows, building styles and historic artefacts which give a place a distinctive character.
Landscape Feature	A prominent eye-catching element, e.g. wooded hill top or church spire.
LEADER +	European Community initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity of their area. Local initiatives have been 'Herefordshire Rivers' and Adventa in Monmouthshire.
Listed Building	A building of architectural or historical importance, graded according to its merit (I, II*, II) and subject to special controls.
Local Access Forum	Set up under CRoW Act to represent a balance of local interests and views, providing independent guidance to the relevant local authorities and Natural England on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests. Each county has one covering their respective areas of the Wye Valley.
Local Authority	An administrative unit of local government, specifically any body listed in section 270 of the Local Government Act 1972 or section 21(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
Local Distinctiveness	Essentially the sum of points of connection between the place and the person. Local distinctiveness is fundamentally about giving professionals a mandate to care for landscape detail, by linking meaning and identity. It is an expression of how landscapes are valued as places which have a distinctiveness and significance that communities cherish as their own and seek to find alternatives to the spread of uniformity in the countryside.
Local Nature Reserve	Site acquired, declared and managed by local authorities in co-operation with EN in order to protect its wildlife value for the benefit of the local community.
Local Planning Authority	The Local Authority, normally the local borough or district council, which is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.
Local Produce	Local production and local producers from within a radius up to 30 miles of a market, or 50 miles in the case of large cities or remote areas, but never more than 100 miles.
Local Transport Plan	A plan produced by the Highway Authority setting out future proposals for transport

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
	infrastructure over the following 5 years and attracting possible Government funding.
Lower Devonian	Lower Devonian rocks contain mudstones, sandstones and calcretes, and are the continuation of the Old Red Sandstone rocks.
mindSCAPES	Wye Valley AONB project reconnecting people with dementia and their carers to the Landscape through access and creative artistic activities, funded by Big Lottery and delivered by ArtSpace Cinderford.
Meadow	Land, usually level and low lying, devoted to grasses and short herbs, which is mown annually for hay.
Mechanically Propelled Vehicle	A vehicle propelled 'mechanically' - generally other than by human or animal. Includes electric cars, vans, etc but not low-powered vehicles such as electric cycles.
Methodology	The specific approach and techniques used for a given study or project.
Modulation	Modulation involves the transfer of money paid to farmers from direct CAP agricultural support payments to a wider range of rural development measures.
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Designated by English Nature or Natural Resources Wales under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to protect and conserve nationally important areas of wildlife habitat and geological formations and to promote scientific research.
National Parks	National Parks are extensive areas each with their own managing authority to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities. There are currently ten National Parks in England and Wales plus the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads that has equivalent status. In October 1999, the Countryside Agency began the process of designating the New Forest and South Downs as National Parks. Sister designation to AONBs, National Parks are living and working landscapes with an increasing focus on supporting the communities and economic activity that underpin their natural beauty.
National Trail	Routes based on Public Rights of Way through the nation's finest and most characteristic countryside, allowing an extensive journey on foot, horseback or by bicycle and capable of attracting tourist use from home and abroad.
Natural Beauty	Legislation and associated guidance defines natural beauty as including the physical elements of flora, fauna, geology and physiographic or geomorphological, the cultural and heritage elements, together with less tangible values such as intactness, rarity, wildness, remoteness, tranquillity and the appeal to the physical senses.
Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)	Legislation that extends the CROW biodiversity duty to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. It contains provisions to clarify the use of mechanically propelled vehicles on public rights of way. It made small change to the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to define the meaning of "statutory undertaker", currently undefined in this Act and refined the definition of "natural beauty".
Nature-based Solutions	Defined by IUCN as "actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits".
Ofgem	Ofgem is the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, a non-ministerial government department and an independent National Regulatory Authority, recognised by EU Directives. The principal objective when carrying out its functions is to protect the interests of existing and future electricity and gas consumers.
Organic Agriculture	A method of production, which puts the highest emphasis on environmental protection and, with regard to livestock production, animal welfare considerations. It avoids or largely reduces the use of synthetic chemical inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, additives and medical products. The word 'organic' may only be applied to products that have been obtained in accordance with EC Regulation 2092/01
Parkland	A large piece of ground usually comprising woodland, pasture and formal gardens, currently or once attached to a country house or mansion.
Pasture	An area of land dominated by grass, which is used only for grazing, as distinct from a meadow that is mown. Pasture may be enclosed fields or unenclosed common land.
Permanent Pasture	Any pasture composed of perennial or self-seeding annual plants kept indefinitely for grazing.

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
Permissive Path	A route where the landowner has granted permission for public use, usually for foot access but occasionally for horse riders, but which is not dedicated as a public right of way.
Peterken 2008	The Wye Valley, by Dr. George Peterken. Collins New Naturalist Library 2008
Planted Ancient Woodland Sites	Ancient Woodland Sites in which the former tree cover has been replaced, often with non-native trees. PAWS often retain important ancient woodland features including characteristic flora, fauna and archaeology.
Pollard	A tree having its top cut off at some height above the ground to promote new and multiple growth, either to avoid the reach of browsing animals or to create aesthetically pleasing forms.
Precautionary Principle	Principle applied, to err on the side of caution where significant environmental damage may occur, but where knowledge on the matter is incomplete, or when the prediction of environmental effects is uncertain.
Protected Area	A geographically defined area which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives.
Public Right of Way	A route where the public has a right to walk, and in some cases ride horses, bicycles, motorcycles, horse-drawn (non mechanically propelled) vehicles or carriages or drive motor vehicles which is designated either a footpath, a bridleway, Restricted Byway, Carriage or Cart Road used mainly as a Footpath (CR/F) or Bridleway (CR/B) or a byway open to all traffic (BOAT). These are shown on the 'Definitive Map' held by the county Highway Authority. A route may also have higher rights eg. be a County Road or other Highway; or simply be incorrectly signed or waymarked and/or have private rights of access.
Public Forest Estate	Woodland owned or leased by the government and primarily managed by the Forestry Commission.
Public Transport	Methods of transporting passengers including buses, trains and taxis but not car passengers.
Quartz Conglomerate	Upper Devonian Quartz Conglomerate and Tintern Sandstone
Quiet Lane	Section 208 of the Transport Act 2000 makes provision for local traffic authorities to designate roads for which they are responsible as Quiet Lanes, enjoying voluntary speed restrictions and promotion for non-motorised traffic.
Ravine WoodLIFE	EU LIFE-Nature funded project 2004-2007: To protect, restore & de-fragment SAC <i>Tilio acerion</i> ravine woodland in Wye Valley & Peak District. Led by WWF-UK with local partners CCW, EN(NE), FC, FCW & AONB delivering £500,000 of works.
Recreation	Any pursuit engaged upon during leisure time, other than pursuits to which people are normally highly committed i.e. shopping, housework, child care etc.
Regional Route	Longer named paths, promoted on the initiative of Local Authorities, signed and fully waymarked, and based on public rights of way, offering more than a day's travelling, perhaps following a theme or feature that offer tourism potential, such as the Wye Valley Walk
Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)	Non-statutory sites of regional geological or geomorphological importance recognised by English Nature, Natural Resources Wales and local authorities.
Renewable energy	Energy generated from resources that are non-fossil fuels, and are unlimited, rapidly replenished or naturally renewable such as wind, water, sun, wave and refuse. Thus the technology includes wind turbines, wave generators, biofuels, solar power, wood fuel burners and boilers etc.
Rights of Way Improvement Plans	Sections 60 to 62 of the CRoW Act require local Highway Authorities to prepare and publish Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) for improving Rights of Way and other access in their areas, taking into account the needs of the public including people with disabilities.
Riparian	Of or relating to, or located on, the banks of a stream or river.
Run-off	Portion of rainfall, melted snow or irrigation water that flows across the ground's surface and is eventually returned to streams.
Rural Development	Known as the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy and is concerned with:

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
Regulation	Modernisation of farms Safety and quality of food products Fair and stable incomes for farmers Environmental challenges Supplementary or alternative job-creating activities to arrest rural depopulation Improvement of living and working conditions and the promotion of equal opportunity. EEA The programme for England under European Regulation EC 1257/1999 is aimed at diversifying farming and forestry businesses and increasing competitiveness, developing new food and non-food products, ensuring the sustainable management of Less Favoured Areas and significantly increasing the areas covered by environmental schemes.
Rural Regeneration	The process of undertaking initiatives for public benefit in areas of social and economic deprivation, through the maintenance or improvement of the physical, social and economic infrastructure and by assisting people who are at a disadvantage because of their social and economic circumstances.
Scheduled Monument (SAM)	A structure identified by Cadw and Historic England for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
Second Home	A fixed property which is the occasional residence of a household that usually lives elsewhere.
Section 106 agreement	A binding agreement between a local planning authority and a developer associated with a grant of planning permission and regarding matters linked to the proposed development.
Sense of Place (Genius Loci)	Concept used to describe the memories and feelings of connectedness evoked by places where people live and work. The essential character of an area: 'Genius Loci' literally means 'spirit of the place'.
Silurian Rocks	Silurian Rocks are marine sandstones, limestones and shales with mudstones in the Upper Silurian which are the lowest of the terrestrial Old Red Sandstone rocks.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Area identified by Natural Resources Wales and English Nature under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest.
Social Exclusion	A summary term describing the collective difficulties experienced by people and/or areas which suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, inadequate housing, poor skills, low income etc.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. SAC defines a site of Community Importance designated by member states through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act, where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated. All candidate SACs in UK are SSSIs.
Special Wildlife Sites	Categorisation developed by County Wildlife Trusts to identify the best places for wildlife outside legally protected areas.
Species	Organisms are named and classified by a system of taxonomy according to similarities in structure and origin. Species are the taxonomic group whose members can interbreed.
Statutory	Denotes something that is defined in legislation.
Statutory Undertaker	Statutory undertakers are organisations authorised by statute or licensed by central government to perform various public undertakings. Section 98 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 defines a statutory undertaker as any person authorised by any enactment to carry out any railway, light railway, tramway, road transport, canal, inland navigation, dock, harbour or pier undertaking or any relevant airport operator. The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 defines as Statutory Undertakes all utilities namely electricity, gas, water, telephone, cable telephone, television and other telecommunications companies.
STEAM	The Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) quantifies the local



<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
	economic impact of tourism, from both stay and day visitors. STEAM is used by most National Parks and numerous Local Authorities. Reports are produced on behalf of clients by a technical team located at the GTS (UK) Ltd Data Processing Centre in New Holland and also in Swansea.
Sudden Oak Death	Popular name given to the fungus <i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> , which infects foliar (leaf) hosts such as <i>Rhododendron</i> and <i>Viburnum</i> and fatally infects bark canker hosts, principally oaks. First identified in Germany in 1993, and the US in 2001, SOD possibly threatens a number of British Deciduous varieties.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	Documents prepared to support and amplify policies in the Local Development Plan or Framework. Such guidance must be consistent with national and local planning policy
Sustainable	When equal consideration is made of the environmental, social and economic impacts of a development or project.
Sustainable Development	The widely used definition is "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".
Sustainable Drainage Plans (SUDS)	Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) note 25 - Development and flood risk seeks to ensure that flood risk is considered on a catchment scale. It directly identifies the potential for SUDS to reduce flooding downstream of developments and promotes the development of teamwork to encourage the incorporation of sustainable drainage in developments. It suggests that local authorities should work closely with the Environment Agency, sewerage undertakers, navigation authorities and prospective developers to enable surface water run-off to be controlled as near to the source as possible through SUDS.
Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR)	SMNR is defined in the Environment (Wales) Act as: "using natural resources in a way and at a rate that maintains and enhances the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide. In doing so, meeting the needs of present generations of people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, and contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act."
Sustrans	A sustainable transport charity, working on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic and its adverse effects.
Tir gofal	Agri-environment scheme in Wales, working on a whole farm approach.
Tourism	Describes the activity of people taking trips away from home and the industry which has developed in response to this activity.
Town and Country Planning System,	System by which all forms of development is planned and controlled. Currently based on the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDF) in England and Wales Spatial Strategy and Local Development Plans (LDP) in Wales
Traffic Management	Measures designed to improve the local environment through the reduction of accidents, injuries, congestion and pollution.
Tranquillity	Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating principally to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting.
Unimproved Grassland	Grassland consisting of native grasses and herbs which have not been significantly affected by treatment with mineral fertilizers, pesticides, intensive grazing or drainage.
Utilities	Organisations performing a public service i.e. Water, gas, electricity etc.
Veteran Tree	Tree which by virtue of its great age, size or condition, is of exceptional value whether in cultural terms, for its landscape contribution or for the benefit of wildlife. 'Great age' is further defined as an individual tree older than half the natural lifespan for that species.
Viewpoint	Publicly accessible positions from which particularly impressive scenic views can be enjoyed. Viewpoints are often associated with interpretive material.
Viewshed	A North American concept for a discrete area which may be mapped or viewed from one or more viewpoints which has inherent scenic qualities and/or aesthetic values as

<b>Term used</b>	<b>Definition / Explanation</b>
	<p>determined by those who view it.</p> <p>The immediate foreground of a viewshed often enjoys more consideration than the far distance or background.</p> <p>Building on the concept of the 'Viewshed' recent work in England has developed the concept of a Strategic View which either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains clear views of readily recognisable natural and/or built elements</li> <li>has a role in defining the visual attractiveness, context or sense of place of an area</li> </ul> <p>contain good examples of landscape unique to the area</p>
Wetland	<p>Transitional areas between wet and dry environments; wetlands range from permanently or intermittently wet land to shallow water and water margins. The term can include marshes, swamps, bogs, some shallow waters and the intertidal zones. When applied to surface waters, it is generally restricted to areas shallow enough to allow the growth of rooted plants.</p>
Whole Farm Conservation Plans	<p>Plans that consider individual farms as a whole, producing tailor-made conservation plans considering farm type, location and any particular wildlife value, identifying adjustments to management practices that can significantly benefit wildlife.</p>
Wildlife Corridor	<p>A continuous feature, normally broadly linear, which facilitates the movement of wildlife through rural or urban environments.</p>
Woodland Grant Scheme	<p>A scheme administered by the Forestry Commission to provide grants to help create new woodlands and to encourage the good management and regeneration of existing woodlands.</p>
World Heritage Site	<p>A UNESCO Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage which encourages the designation of cultural and natural heritage sites.</p>
Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	<p>Designated in 1971, currently one of the 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and covering 326 square kilometres of south Herefordshire, eastern Monmouthshire and western Gloucestershire, with a dedicated Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) and staff team and statutory management plan.</p>

## **downstream**

see -  
the single leaf  
let loose from slender bough

falls  
to the river's liquid lap

drifts beneath the quick blue  
of kingfishers, the curt calls of coots  
and the slap of oars

a comma in a story  
written with fluid tongue  
that mirrors trees, skies, birds,  
takes its colour from light  
and the interruptions of soil,  
counts its age in aeons

this living artery  
conducts the ebb and swell  
of melancholy and hope  
repeating voices  
reflecting choices

carries all our yesterdays  
towards tomorrow

Harriet Fraser

## Map 2. AONB Landscape Management Zones

