

AONB FUNDING BIDS

Purpose

To update members on various funding allocation secured by the AONB Unit and seek endorsement on behalf of the AONB Partnership.

Recommendations

That the JAC

- A. Welcomes the various funding allocations secured by the AONB Unit on behalf of the AONB Partnership.

- B. Endorses the Lower Wye Nature Networks application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Nature Networks Fund in partnership with Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Unit has successfully secured the following funding for projects:
 - Severn Trent Boost for Biodiversity - Brockweir Riverside Invasive Non-Native Species Treatment (BRINNST)
 - NRW Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience Funding (BERF)
 - Environment Agency Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Riparian Tree projects
- The AONB Unit is leading on a partnership bid to the Nature Networks Fund (NNF) through National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) with Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust.

Reasons

The Wye Valley AONB Unit develops collaborative landscape-scale projects to help deliver the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. Wherever possible these are cross-border initiatives that aim to manage the Wye Valley as a holistic landscape. However, the national boundary and administrative complexity of the Wye Valley means that invariably funding sources are only available on one side of the border or in one county. The AONB Unit works to stitch these various opportunities together to deliver coherent projects and initiatives to conserve and enhance the Wye Valley AONB irrespective of any other constraints.

Implications

The Severn Trent Boost for Biodiversity - Brockweir Riverside Invasive Non-Native Species Treatment (BRINNST)

The AONB Unit has been awarded a grant of £7,250 to carry out work under Severn Trent's Boost for Biodiversity 2021 Scheme. The spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), particularly Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed is a major issue throughout the Lower Wye Valley. The AONB Unit have been successful in securing funding to control INNS between Bigsweir and Brockwier on the Gloucestershire side. Along this stretch Himalayan Balsam is a dominant species on the banks of the River Wye SSSI & SAC. There are also a number of large stands of Japanese Knotweed on the river bank. Himalayan Balsam in particular, but also Knotweed in places, is spreading into both nearby farmland and woodland, including The Hudnalls NNR & SSSI, part of the Wye Valley Woodlands SAC. American Skunk Cabbage is also present on nearby tributaries. This project will use both contractors and volunteers to carry out INNS control over 18 months and will work at creating a legacy where landowners, contractors and the community are better placed to deal with follow up work required to keep on top of INNS on this section of the River Wye. This work will complement existing initiatives and funding for INNS work on the Welsh side around Llandogo and Tintern.

NRW Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience Fund (BERF)

The AONB Unit is liaising with Natural Resources Wales over delivery of £40,000 from the Biodiversity & Ecosystems Resilience Fund (BERF), to support the conservation of protected sites and species, such as the River Wye SAC, Wye Valley Woodlands SAC and the Bat Roost SAC.

Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Riparian Tree project work

The Environment Agency has offered £40,000 to continue funding the Natural Flood Management (NFM) project work in the Gloucestershire part of the AONB and Riparian Tree work in collaboration with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust.

Nature Networks Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid

The AONB Unit is leading on a bid to the Nature Networks Fund (NNF) through National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The application, for Wales only, is for £260,000 until March 2023. The Lower Wye Nature Network project is in partnership with Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust, and in collaboration with Monmouthshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales. The Fund aims to strengthen the resilience of Wales' network of protected sites (SSSIs, SACs etc), supporting a green recovery for nature and communities. The Lower Wye Nature Networks project is concentrating on the conservation and enhancement of a number of the grassland and woodland SSSIs and the management and connectivity between and around them in the Wye Valley AONB. The submission deadline was 30th June and if successful the project would run from October 2021 until March 2023. A Partnership Agreement will be prepared between the 3 lead partner organisations.