

AONB UNIT REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley AONB Unit.

FOR INFORMATION

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

- a) AONB Volunteers & Youth Rangers
- b) Appointment of Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer
- c) Wye Valley Villages Transport Plan update
- d) Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) work (Monmouthshire)
- e) Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) AONB Office refurbishment

a) AONB Volunteers & Youth Rangers

Sarah Sawyer, AONB Community Links Officer, has been ensuring whenever possible that the AONB Volunteers and AONB Youth Ranger are out on site undertaking conservation tasks and training activities. All events are carefully risk assessed to ensure Covid restrictions are adhered in England and Wales, as criteria has varied between counties.

b) Appointment of Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer

A successful recruitment process has led to the appointment of the new Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer, funded through Welsh Government. The post holder will start in mid July. They will assist the AONB Unit in delivering activities in the Lower Wye Valley focusing on

- Habitat restoration through Nature Recovery projects, Green Infrastructure & the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR)
- Working with farmers, landowners, tourism enterprises, local communities and volunteers in and around the AONB
- Collaboration with partners including Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Monmouthshire County Council & Gwent Wildlife Trust
- Validation & promotion of a Nature Recovery Network map
- Promotion & facilitation of the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

c) Wye Valley Villages Transport Plan update

Arup have completed Phase 2 of the study which identifies and develops six key themes as the pillars of the vision for the main villages in the Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB.

These are:

- place-making,
- governance,
- tourism,
- landscape,
- transport and movement
- local economy.

This Stage 2 report is currently being presented to the project stakeholders, led by Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and representatives from the Community Councils of St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United, along with local county councillors and officers from MCC and the Wye Valley AONB. Following any modification, the Study report will then be available for public consultation. The project is an essential precursor to determining and developing capital projects to further conserve and enhance the Wye Valley AONB. The Wye Valley Villages Plan is funded by Welsh Government's AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding and by Monmouthshire County Council.

d) Lower Wye Green Infrastructure (GI) work (Monmouthshire)

The Lower Wye Projects Officer is progressing with the various access enhancement initiatives, particularly:

- enhancements to the Wordsworth Walk around Llandogo and Cleddon Falls.
- specifying a solution to maintain the Wye Valley Walk between the Duke of Beaufort Bridge and the Monmouthshire Show Ground where there is river bank erosion.
- Monitoring the Natural Flood Management (NFM) interventions on Chapel Hill Lane at the southern end of Tintern. This pilot NFM scheme on the Unclassified County Road (UCR) was completed in April and aims to improve the lane's drainage and halt the prolonged hydraulic erosion and degradation of its fragile surface. The pilot Chapel Hill Lane scheme is funded by the Welsh Government through the Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) grant.

e) Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) AONB Office refurbishment

The decarbonisation and refurbishment of the AONB Office at Hadnock Road, Monmouth is progressing to First Fix stage. The AONB Office was very poorly insulated and thermally inefficient. The works will make a significant reduction to the carbon footprint of the AONB Unit. This will be measured and assessed later in the year under a separate initiative for National Parks and AONB in Wales. Both projects are supported through the Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) funding. It is hoped that the AONB staff will be able to return to the refurbished office, Covid restrictions allowing, in September.