

AONB 50TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMME

Purpose

To advise of progress with the celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of the Wye Valley being designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1971.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The AONB's 50th Anniversary celebrations during 2021 have been less ambitious than originally planned due to the uncertainties and limitations of the Covid restrictions.
- A consistent campaign of social media 'take-over' posts and regular promotions of 50walks@50 have helped raise the profile of the AONB.
- A repeat of the 5 yearly AONB Perceptions Survey is planned to benchmark activity against results from 2016 and 2011.
- The Wye Valley AONB Manager will be co-chairing a major on-line conference on 1st December on 'What is Natural Beauty'.

Reasons

Throughout 2021 it was intended that the AONB's 50th Anniversary celebrations would provide an opportunity to raise public awareness of the Wye Valley AONB and the work carried out by the JAC, the AONB Unit and the AONB Partnership. However the ongoing impacts and implications of the Covid pandemic have reduced ambition and activity.

An AONB Perceptions questionnaire was initiated in 2011 as part of the AONB's 40th Anniversary celebrations. The survey was circulated to AONB Partnership members asking a series of questions about their perceptions of the Wye Valley AONB, the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) & the AONB Unit. The survey was repeated in 2016. It would seem timely to update and repeat the survey after a further 5 years.

Implications

The AONB Information Officer, Ruth Waycott, has been managing the AONB social media channels with regular 'take-overs' by local activists, artists, conservationists and entrepreneurs explaining what they do in the AONB and how and why the outstanding landscape is important to them. See

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/wyevalley.aonb> ,

Twitter <https://twitter.com/wyebeauty/> and

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/wyevalleyaonb/> .

AONB projects and initiatives have also been highlighted along with each week a new promoted 50walks@50 (see <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/50-walks50/>)

The AONB Perceptions questionnaire would ask as many of the original questions as possible to allow baseline comparisons. However, the opportunity will be taken to expand some questions and also to ask some new ones. In anticipation of the Government's forthcoming response to the Landscapes Review, it would seem pertinent as ask about the package of Glover's "Proposal 24: AONBs strengthened with new purposes, powers and resources, renamed as National Landscapes"

The questionnaire will be distributed electronically via Survey Monkey to individuals and organisations involved in the AONB Partnership or connected with various AONB projects. The survey results will be reported to the next JAC in March 2022.

'What is Natural Beauty?' is a national on-line symposium planned for 1st December. The event will be hosted by the UK's Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas, and is being run by the PLACE Collective with the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the Lake District National Park Authority. The provisional programme is available here <https://theplacecollective635096760.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/what-is-natural-beauty-outline-programme-1.pdf> and tickets are on sale available here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/what-is-natural-beauty-symposium-tickets-194455059317> .

Background

The Wye Valley AONB Designation Order was submitted on 24th February 1971. The Order was confirmed and signed on 13th December 1971 simultaneously by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales.