

WYE VALLEY VILLAGES TRAVEL & TRANSPORT PLAN UPDATE

Purpose

To advise members of the completion of the consultation on the Wye Valley Villages Plan for the Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley AONB.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley Villages Travel & Transport Plan project is led by Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and a partnership made of representatives from St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United Community Councils, with local county councillors and officers from MCC and the Wye Valley AONB.
- ARUP have been commissioned to prepare a Plan for the main villages in the Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB to address and provide recommendations on a range of travel and transport issues.
- A 6 week public consultation period was completed on a Stage 2 Report with 260 comments received. ARUP are now assimilating the comments to prepare a Final Report and Action Plan later in November.
- There are funds allocated in the AONB's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) allocation from Welsh Government this financial year for some 'quick win' delivery from the Plan.

Reasons

The initiatives arose predominantly from a number of communities in the lower Wye Valley expressing concern about traffic speeds and road safety. The fragile state of the tourism economy had also come into focus with various closures and restrictions on the A466 in the lower Wye Valley, due to land slips (and lockdowns). However these issues were recognised to form part of a much more complex set of challenges that needed to be considered in a broader village and Wye Valley AONB context.

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) established a partnership made of representatives from the Community Councils of St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United, with local county councillors and officers from MCC and the Wye Valley AONB. In November 2020 a contract was awarded to ARUP to prepare a Plan for the main villages in the Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB to address and provide recommendations on a range of issues, including:

- Road (safety) and village infrastructure improvement schemes

- Active travel links within and between communities, including better integration of walking and cycling networks & leisure routes within the valley
- Public transport
- signage audit & review
- visitor experience

ARUP complete a Stage 1 Report consisting of an evidence review along with consultation on stakeholder mapping and a SWOT analysis. The Stage 2 Report was subsequently developed presenting a vision for an integrated strategy with proposals for each village based around the key themes of landscape, transport and movement, local economy, tourism, placemaking, and governance.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic it was decided that the consultation on the Stage 2 Report would use ARUP's on-line Virtual Engage platform. A 6-week public consultation on the Stage 2 Report closed on 30th September. The on-line information in the 'virtual engage room' included a short introductory video by Deputy Leader of Monmouthshire County Council, Councillor Sara Jones, links to the consultation document and a breakdown of the proposals for each of the eight Wye Valley villages – Trellech, Penallt, The Narth, Devauden, Tintern, St Arvans, Llandogo, Llanishen and Catbrook.

Implications

There were 260 responses to the consultation, the majority through the Virtual Engage website, which received over 1000 visitations. ARUP consider this a successful response rate. Preliminary analysis of the key messages indicate:

- General consensus and support for Road Safety (20mph limits, village gateways)
- General support for the concept of the network of villages
- Need to focus intervention and where to offer limited change
- Messaging around active travel is key, and need to show it is for all
- Need to do more to improve accessibility and inclusivity –maintenance, ease of access for all ages & abilities
- The River Wye needs to feature more strongly
- Final report will need to be refined with clarity of proposed interventions and clear messaging on delivery.

There was some concern expressed by members of the partnership that residents without good IT skills or connectivity were not able to respond. Similarly some thought the language and terminology used in the Report was too ambitious &/or unclear, deterring respondents.

ARUP are now completing the full evaluation of the responses and preparing the Final Report for the partnership. The "Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future" will be a strategic framework plan that sets a holistic vision for transformation through a programme of short, mid and long-term interventions.

Background

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.