

WYE VALLEY AONB VILLAGES PLAN FOR THE FUTURE – STAGE 3 REPORT

Purpose

To seek endorsement of the final Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report covering the main village in the Monmouthshire part of the AONB.

Recommendations

That the JAC:

- A. Endorse the Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report and continue engagement with the local stakeholders in delivering the Plan.
- B. Encourage the respective Community Councils to adopt the Plan and provide representatives to sit on the Delivery Group.

Key Issues

- The Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan has been a joint project between Monmouthshire County Council (MCC), Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the four constituent Community Councils of St Arvans, Trellech United, Devauden and Tintern.
- The catalyst for the study was road safety issues and excessive traffic speeds in many of the Monmouthshire villages in the Lower Wye Valley but the scope was widened to consider the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the communities.
- ARUP were commissioned in December 2020 by MCC to carry out this study.
- Funding was secured from the Wye Valley AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme along with contributions from MCC and the Community Councils.
- A Steering Group of representatives from the four Community Councils, County Councillors, AONB Manager and MCC officers has been overseeing progress.
- The final Wye Valley AONB Villages Plan for the Future Stage 3 Report is now completed and available to download (note that it is 250 pages)
- The preparation of new village gateway signage is underway as an initial project.


Reasons

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. The intention was to address issues from a number of communities in the lower Wye Valley over concerns

about traffic speeds and road safety and also impacts and implications from various closures and restrictions on the A466 in the lower Wye Valley. However, these 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.

In December 2020 Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) commissioned 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. Wide consultation with the public was undertaken on the Stage 1 Report which gathered views on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Themes and village proposals were the focus of the Stage 2 Report through an online 6 week Virtual Engage consultation. Paper copies of the Stage 2 Report and a questionnaire were also made available. In total, 260 responses were received which shaped the proposals in the Final Report. Throughout the process, representatives from the Community Council have had the opportunity to input their views into the process and shape the project.

The final Stage 3 Report is available to download until 9th March from

 [Wye Valley Villages - Stage 3 Report](#) . The final Stage 3 Report is 250 pages long and includes 3 main parts – the Six Point Plan, Village Plans and the Action Plan, along with 4 appendices including the Stage 1 & 2 Reports. The low resolution version is 23MB.

The Six Point Plan section outlines the projects and initiatives which are recommended to meet community needs and wider sustainable development goals. Given the strength of community support for road safety improvements this is afforded priority. The Plan addresses change over different timescales from smaller, localised projects such as speed reductions and signage which can be delivered early to broader and more complex initiatives such as improving the health of the River Wye. The six points are:

- Ensure safe and sustainable transport
- Conserve and enhance the landscape
- Enable sustainable tourism
- Retain and improve the network of unique villages
- Support the local economy
- Provide joined-up governance

The Village Plan section contains diagrammatic plans explaining how the proposed interventions could be implemented in each village and includes an individual action plan for each village setting out the projects and key information around timescale, the partners to be involved in delivery and the level of priority. This is followed by an Action Plan tabulating area wide actions. The report is appended by the results of the consultation and an example of a detailed illustrative plan including a suggested palette of materials and indicative costs.

Implications

The final Stage 3 Report contains a range of village and study area wide actions that are prioritised and suggest organisations that should be involved in delivery. Some actions are defined and ready to go whereas other actions will require more exploration to determine what needs to be done, who needs to be involved and how the project will be funded.

It is proposed that a Delivery Group is set up which could have a wider membership than the previous Steering Group. This is detailed in the Plan's Section 6 Next Steps. Each Community Council is encouraged to nominate two representatives to sit on the Delivery Group, alongside MCC and AONB representatives. This emphasises the importance of the next phase of this project and at the first meeting of the Delivery Group a Terms of Reference will be considered. Delivery Group members will be the link between their respective organisation and the Delivery Group. To improve communication, notes of the Delivery Group meetings will be taken and shared with Community Councils so that all Community Councillors can be kept informed. The JAC will continue to be regularly updated.

Delivery Group meetings may develop actions for each Community Council to take forward in terms of delivering a discreet village project, confirming a financial contribution, consulting with residents, etc.

In general, it is envisaged that officers from the different stakeholder organisations will be responsible for delivery. The Councillors role will be to ensure that the project to be delivered is the right project, that local considerations are taken into account and to assist, where appropriate, with assembling funding and local consultation.

Should a Community Council be the lead for a discreet village project then officers within MCC and the AONB Unit will be able to signpost Community Councillors and the clerk to organisations that can help them take forward their project and provide support and advice. For these projects, the respective Community Council would be expected to arrange meetings etc. to progress the project.

An example of how this relationship would work is the village gateway signs project. The workflow is set out below:

- The Action Plan has been identified in the need.
- MCC and Wye Valley AONB Unit are best placed to commission the contract to design a template to be used across the area for the main villages and to arrange installation.
- Design options to be discussed with the Delivery Group and a design agreed.
- Community Council reps will help confirm locations and sizes of existing signs.
- Funding is from the AONB and Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme, however depending on the final cost, Community Councils may be required to make a contribution to the manufacture and installation

Background

In October 2019 member representatives from the Community Councils of St. Arvans, Devauden, Tintern and Trellech United met with local county councillors and officers from Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and the Wye Valley AONB along with the MCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment. The communities expressed concern about traffic speeds and road safety; the fragile state of commerce and the tourism economy; the need for greater emphasis upon active travel and public transport, both in terms of day to day getting about but also how it might support a future tourism offer that places less reliance upon the car; sympathetic signage in and of the Wye Valley AONB.

There was a consensus to work together on a joint project. It was agreed to create a plan for the Villages in the Monmouthshire / Welsh part of the Wye Valley AONB that would be adopted by all of the local councils, the county council and Wye Valley AONB Partnership.