

## **AONB UNIT WORK PROGRAMME 2022/2023**

### ***Purpose***

To seek members' approval for the finalised AONB Unit work programme for this financial year, following confirmation of funding from DEFRA, NRW and Welsh Government.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC endorses the finalised Wye Valley AONB Unit Work Programme for 2022/2023

### ***Key Issues***

- The proposed Wye Valley AONB Unit Work Programme for 2022/2023 was presented in draft and endorsed at the last meeting, due to budgets for the AONB not having been confirmed.
- New AONB core funding allocations have been offered by DEFRA and Welsh Government for 2022-2025 and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for 2022-2024. Welsh Government have also confirmed allocations for the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme for 2022-2025.
- Various project funding bids have also been confirmed covering this financial year.
- The new Community Links Officer and the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer have been recruited and both start in the coming weeks.
- The medium term funding has also enabled consolidation of the Lower Wye Projects Officer and Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer posts. The shared AONB Planning Officer with the Malvern Hills AONB Partnership is also being proceeded. This will take the AONB Unit up to 7.3FTE.
- The finalised Wye Valley AONB Unit Work Programme for 2022/2023. An estimated percentage of each staff member's time on each work programme activity is included. Activities are also assessed for impacts of any potential on-going implications from Covid-19.
- The AONB Unit operating budget for 2022/23 is £342,540 with an additional £1.1million of project funding, delegated grants and leveraged match funding during the year.
- This enables an ambitious work programme focused on the delivery of the AONB Management Plan and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

### ***Reasons***

Both Welsh & UK governments have acknowledged the need to improve funding for AONBs. The Wye Valley AONB Unit has received multi-year funding agreements from DEFRA, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The DEFRA allocation included a 14.7%

increase on last year's offer and the NRW reinstated/reversed the 7% cut made last year. Welsh Government also confirm a Revenue funding allocation along with the delegated Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grant and Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme.

Overall the AONB Unit business plan, based on the Work Programme, focuses on optimising the resources available to address climate action and nature recovery while maximising the benefits for the local communities, the local economy and the outstanding landscape. Best use is made of opportunities for collaboration and maintaining a level of flexibility and capacity to lever in funding and resources wherever possible.

### ***Implications***

The consolidation of medium-term core funding for the AONB Unit enables an operating budget for 2022/23 of £342,540. The Work Programme is also facilitated by additional project funding, delegated grants and leveraged match funding which is expected to exceed £1.1million for the year.

With the AONB Unit getting up to a full complement of staff, equalling 7.3FTE, this enables an ambitious work programme to be delivered, focused on the AONB Management Plan and the conservation and enhancement of the AONB.

The Work Programme is augmented by projects and partnership initiatives with funding and grants from a variety of sources. For example the Lower Wye Nature Recovery Officer helps deliver the Lower Wye Nature Networks project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Nature Networks Fund. There are a range of projects funded through the Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme. Delegated grant schemes, particularly DEFRA's Farming in Protected Landscape (FiPL) programme and Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) bring in significant match funding from applicants, adding value to the core AONB activities and leveraging investment into the AONB.

Long term security of funding for the AONB Unit and future AONB work programmes will depend on the way in which both DEFRA and Welsh Government progress recommendations in the respective Reviews of Designated Landscapes in England and Wales about appropriate purposes, powers and resources for AONBs.