

AONB PARTNERSHIP STUDY TOUR AND WINTER SEMINAR

Purpose

To feedback on the success of the AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour and propose the theme for a Winter Seminar of Planning in a National Landscape.

Recommendation

That the JAC:

- A. welcomes the positive feedback on the AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour
- B. endorses a late Winter Seminar on the theme of Planning in a National Landscape

Key Issues

- A total of 37 people attended the annual AONB Partnership Tour on 22nd September.
- There was a good spread of representation from throughout the AONB even though the Tour was focused around lower Wye Valley between Monmouth and Tintern.
- The tour visited a range of sites associated with social and/or land-use management initiatives supported in various ways by the AONB, including a One Planet Development, a Village Hall, 2 farms - one a Nature Reserve and other a youth farm charity, and Old Station Tintern.
- Feedback from attendees of the Tour has been extremely positive and the time and dedication of the speakers and hosts is greatly appreciated.
- It is proposed that a Winter Seminar is held, probably in February or March, on the theme of Planning in a National Landscape, focusing on Strategic and Development Control issues and implications for the AONB as a National Landscape.

Reasons

The AONB Partnership Tour continues to be popular and inspiring event, visiting interesting places with expert speakers. The AONB Winter Seminar is a similar opportunity to provide in-depth expert information on specific topics and issues. Both are key tools in the transfer of information to the wider partners and interested parties in the AONB, particularly to local Ward members, key officers and the Town, Parish/ Community Councils.

Implications

Of the 37 attendees on the Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour, 7 came from Herefordshire, 14 from Monmouthshire and 8 from Gloucestershire. There were 8 JAC members, 15 Town/Parish/Community Council members, 15 officers, including 6 AONB staff. Feedback from attendees was very positive.

Sites and issues visited, and hosts or speakers were:-

- Tintern Wireworks car park: Tintern Visitor Experience - Matthew Lewis [Environment & Culture Manager MonLife]
- Dôl-Wen One Planet Development: Matt & Freyja [smallholders]
- Old Station Tintern: Decarbonisation and Sustainable Tourism initiatives SLSP funded - Jenny Henshaw [Site Lead, MonLife]
- Llandogo Village Hall: Decarbonisation initiatives Lottery & SLSP funded - Andrew Spencer [Village Hall Committee]
- Pentwyn Farm Reserve: Conservation Grazing - Joe Ryder [Gwent Wildlife Trust]
- Jamie's Farm: Dan Smith [Farm Manager]

As always the contribution of the speakers and hosts was much appreciated.

Earlier in the year the AONB Unit hosted a late-Winter Seminar, on 'Enhancing water catchment through innovative land management'. For this winter, there is the opportunity to focus on Planning issues, with Josh Bailey, AONB Planning Officer now settled in post. The scope of the seminar could include the implications of the changes to AONBs in terms of new powers for 'relevant authorities' (assuming the enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill) and the National Landscapes branding. The event may be of particular interest to Town, Parish and Community Council Councillors as well as members of Local Authority Planning Committees. A suitable date and venue will be arranged as soon as possible.

Background

The annual AONB Partnership Tour is traditionally held on one of the last Fridays in September. Tours were not held in 2020 nor 2021 due to the coronavirus restrictions. The 2022 Tour visited a range of sites associated with land-use and land management around various AONB projects and initiatives along with regenerative farming and recreation, including variously football, fishing and hostel accommodation in and around Ross-on-Wye, Brampton Abbots, Lydbrook & Welsh Bicknor in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire parts of the AONB.