

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
7th March 2016

WYE VALLEY RIVER FESTIVAL 2016

Purpose

To inform members of the programme for the Wye Valley River Festival 2016.

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Sufficient funding for the Wye Valley River Festival to proceed has been secured from Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council England, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and many other sources (see attached appendix).
- A programme of events between 29th April & 15th May 2016 is being finalised and is outlined below.
- After the Festival fortnight a full evaluation of the Festival will be undertaken to appraise whether to hold a third Wye Valley River Festival in 2018.

Reasons

The 2014 Wye Valley River Festival was a recognised success. During 2015 grants and support were secured to undertake an extensive Research and Development (R&D) process, which brought environmentalists, artists and communities together to explore the theme of the River as a Global Artery. Further grants and funding have been secured sufficient to lay on the Wye Valley River Festival 2016.

The general aims and objectives of the Wye Valley River Festival remain:

To celebrate nature, culture, landscape and life along the River Wye.

- To bring together communities up and down the river through a high quality arts programme that reflects the unique qualities of the area and its people
- Building new audiences and increasing participation in the arts and the AONB Partnership's work
- Work with local partners, organisations and businesses to provide a platform for local artists, groups and voluntary sector organisations
- Invest in professional development for artists and communities, enabling them to create work beyond their normal range, cultivating positive working partnerships
- Creatively engage schools and colleges and encourage volunteer involvement in the event organization
- Encourage sponsorship, promotion and engagement of the event by local business
- Promote the profile of the Wye Valley as a premier destination, encouraging visitors to visit more frequently and stay longer, helping to support and develop cultural tourism in and for relatively isolated rural communities.

- Develop a sustainable, nationally recognised biennial Wye Valley River Festival that complements the areas and the AONB's existing programme, initially looking at a 5 years strategy (three festivals; 2014, 2016 & 2018).

Implications

Wye Valley AONB Unit, together with the Festival Director Phillippa Haynes and Artistic Directors Desperate Men, have been developing the marketing and programming for the Wye Valley River Festival 2016 together with a wide range of environmental professionals and artists. The evolving programme of events between 29th April & 15th May is outlined below.

The central theme is 'Global Arteries' which connects to our complex and universal relationship with water. The programme of events will create spaces for celebration, wonder and entertainment and to provoke thought regarding our precious River Wye and its connections to other rivers and people around the world. The Festival aims to inspire and challenge, to change the way we look at ourselves, how we see things and how we relate to our environment, locally and globally.

There is a vibrant partnership of actors, singers, musicians and dancers that sweep downstream creating magic, mayhem and laughter, under the artistic directorship of the Desperate Men, bringing to life the central narrative of the Wye Valley River Festival. The main artists and performers appointed to deliver the core Arts Council funded programme are listed below, as well as the many of the funders, sponsors and supportive organisations. Many of the latter are assisting with the schools engagement strand overseen by Sue Parkinson.

The AONB Unit retain a core focus and supervisory overview of the programme and the Festival Team. This will be the dominant focus for the work of the Unit over the next 3 months.

Background

The River Festival provides a unique opportunity to engage new audiences with the AONB, broadening understanding through art and reaching a more diverse public. There has been nothing of this kind in the area and the 2014 River Festival showed that there is an appetite for quality arts and community led events that link communities throughout the valley, which also attracts visitors. The enthusiasm and energy which the Wye Valley River Festival receives from all quarters continues to impress and motivate all involved. However a considerable amount of monitoring is being planned for the Festival and a full evaluation and will be undertaken to appraise whether there are sufficient benefits to establish a third River Festival in 2018.

The Wye Valley River Festival can be seen as a legacy of AONB Partnership's success in delivering the £3.1m Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership scheme 'Overlooking the Wye'. During the scheme's final year in 2012, also the AONB's 40th anniversary, 10,000 attended four separate celebratory events held down the Wye Valley. Subsequently the idea for a festival spanning the length of the river emerged.

Wye Valley River Festival 2016 - Outline Programme

<u>Date & Place</u>	Activities
<u>February - April</u> <u>various</u>	Walking and storytelling workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local walkers start exploring, sharing and planning walks that will become part of the River Festival in April and May 2016 The sessions are led by Roger Drury who has been a community arts worker in and around the Forest of Dean for the last 30 years.
<u>February - April</u> <u>Ross, Monmouth,</u> <u>Llandogo</u>	Sing Out Loud Choir workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> choir leaders help build a glorious choral tide of singers with songs about water, rain, rivers, seas, tears and tea to perform during the Festival.
<u>March - April</u> <u>various</u>	Schools Banner making workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local environmental professionals & volunteers working alongside community artists Becky Prior and Faye Joines in 10 schools to create 4m double-sided flags that references river life around the Wye Valley.
	<p>Serai [a place or palace for the coming together of travelling caravans]</p> <p>Wye Serai - the main performance and activity space created around three intriguing caravans of Curiosities and Hydrosities, a 'River Ambulance' and a mysterious Samovar, and the Water Ones wrangling in a comic chaos of pouring and spilling, singing and dancing, as the river characters share their watery dreams.</p>
<u>29th April</u> <u>Hereford</u>	Festival Launch, Evening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual spectacle of water, fire, music and performance which announces the first 'Wye Serai'. A procession of illuminated water monsters herald the arrival of the magical Samovar.
<u>30th April</u> <u>Hereford</u>	Hereford River Carnival and Wye Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full day of family fun with music, dance, food and drink, with processions, a fantastic flotilla and thousands of origami fish. Water rituals and aqua play erupts with the Water Ones as the Samovar fire is finally lit and the first Wye Teas are served!
<u>1st May</u> <u>Ross-on-Wye</u>	daytime Wye Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Water Ones continue their stories - celebrating water, life, rivers, seas, washing up, teas and tears – with evocative dances, spillages, songs and silliness. Ross-beer-fest (30th April-2nd May): Beer and Cider Festival, Ross Rowing Club
<u>2nd May</u> <u>Bishopswood</u> <u>Lydbrook</u>	Bishopswood Breakfast, leading to Lydbrook Fair and daytime Wye Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The River A&E Ambulance tests the river's health and the Caravan of Fact and Wonder explores the mysteries and subtleties of H₂O, streams, ponds and drains... The Water Ones take their troubles and their dreams downstream with the Samovar Stokers brewing up potions to keep them going.
<u>2nd - 8th May -</u> <u>Redbrook</u>	Sound Installation by Dan Fox <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shimmering cymbals bathed in light echo with the murmured resonances of recorded sounds, local stories, voices, and surprising noises in live interaction with people as they cross Redbrook Bridge.
<u>4th May</u> <u>various (tbc)</u>	Mini Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the intriguing caravans with performances during the day at various village locations.
<u>5th May</u> <u>various (tbc)</u>	Mini Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the intriguing caravans with performances during the day at various village locations.

<u>6th May</u> <u>various (tbc)</u>	Mini Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the intriguing caravans with performances during the day at various village locations.
<u>6th May</u> <u>Old Station</u> <u>Tintern</u>	Luminous Birds & evening Wye Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A water celebration with Samovar tea , performance and nonsense to welcome the opening of Luminous Birds by Kathy Hinde
<u>6th - 15th May</u> <u>Old Station</u> <u>Tintern</u>	Luminous Birds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a magical installation of floating paper birds, swaying in the trees.
<u>6th May</u> <u>Monmouth</u>	Arts and Landscape Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulture’s national conference on Arts and Landscape, Shire Hall Monmouth • Street Performances with River Characters - daytime in town centre
<u>7th May</u> <u>Monmouth</u>	daytime Wye Serai leading to evening show <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulture’s Outdoor Arts commissions on the streets of Monmouth; exciting new work for the outdoors from emerging artists • river characters froth up a bath of delights around the Samovar; musical mischief and wild water spectacle of cooking, cleaning, washing, bathing and splashing lead into night time fire wizardry.
<u>8th May</u> The Slaughters, Symonds Yat East	daytime special Mini Wye Serai and magical woodland walk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the Sap Rising and hear the Earth Move.
<u>11th May</u> <u>various (tbc)</u>	Mini Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the intriguing caravans with performances during the day at various village locations.
<u>12th May</u> <u>various (tbc)</u>	Mini Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the intriguing caravans with performances during the day at various village locations.
<u>13th May</u> <u>various (tbc)</u>	Mini Serai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the intriguing caravans with performances during the day at various village locations.
<u>13th May</u> <u>Tintern</u>	evening Talk: The Art of Sustainability - Rivers, Local meets Global <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live link to Brazil with Professor Henrique Chaves (University of Brasilia, Brazil) in conversation with Simon Evans, Wye and Usk Foundation (booking essential through Eventbrite)
<u>14th May</u> <u>Llandogo</u>	daytime Wye Serai leading to evening performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire torches and musicians converge to meet at the river’s edge. Fantastic illuminations will light the riverside as choirs join with the Water Ones to bless the waters of the Wye.
<u>15th May</u> <u>Chepstow</u>	The Grand Finale: Evening performance of the Wye Serai - Chepstow Racecourse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a river shaped fire sculpture, lanterns in the woods - the resolution of all the water stories and the final servings from the Samovar.



Wye Valley River Festival: Who's Who

Festival Development Team (*covered similar roles in 2014 River Festival).

Festival Director: Phillipa Haynes*.

Artistic Directors: Richard Headon & Jon Beedell (Desperate Men)*

Production Manager: Netty Miles*

Artists & Performers

Desperate men*: "Comedy is just a funny way of being serious" One of the UK's most versatile and inventive outdoor arts companies, Desperate Men's mischievous, warm-hearted work invites audiences to ask serious questions about the world. They have been welcoming people to play and collaborate with them for over 35 years, creating, performing and producing ground-breaking outdoor theatre in the UK and internationally.

www.desperatemen.com

And Now*: working with people, fire structures, fireworks, sound and light, And Now conceive and create visual performance, images and happenings. Their work is unexpected, accessible, entertaining and explores and merges the boundaries of visual and performance art, landscape, installation and spectacle. www.andnow.co.uk

Dan Fox: a musician, composer and audio-visual artist Dan's company, Sound Intervention, specialises in outdoor work: Sound design for illuminated trails, interactive installations, aeolian sound sculptures, sound-walks, street-bands, and mobile Boom Bike sound systems. @soundinterventn www.danfox.net

Kathy Hinde: combining sound, sculpture, image and light, Kathy's work is expressed through audio-visual installations and performances that grow from a partnership between nature and technology. She creates light and sound installations in public spaces, including High Streets and nature reserves, across 4 continents. www.kathyhinde.co.uk

Mr & Mrs Clark*: are Gareth Clark and Marega Palser. Playful and interactive, they relish bringing art forms and people together. A DIY approach to exploring and developing ideas ensures the production of original dance, theatre and site-specific events. Creative, interactive performance pieces for festivals and touring dance and theatre productions have led them all over the world www.mrandmrsclark.co.uk

Tim Hill: a musician, performer and creator of outdoor shows drawing on histories of outdoor ritual, celebration and traditions of circus, village and street bands. Tim's band Tongues of Fire are a riot of reeds and brass, making a rich, wild and unique noise for processing, dancing and festivity. His company, Rag and Bone, creates elemental worlds to wander and dream in. www.tongues-of-fire.co.uk www.rag-bone.org

Roger Drury: a community arts worker in and around the Forest of Dean for the last 30 years.

Becky Prior: a design and fabrication artist based in Bristol, upcycles unusual materials to create beautiful jewellery and also makes puppets and props for theatre, designing decor and site specific artwork for events.

Faye Joines: Combining over 10 years experience in youth work and passion for the arts, she facilitates creative workshops all over Bristol. Her particular areas of interest are Photography and Visual Arts.

The Wye Valley River Festival has secured funding from the following:-

Main funders

- Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)
- Arts Council England
- Arts Council of Wales
- Big Lottery
- Shire Hall Monmouth
- Environment Agency
- Ernest Cook Trust
- Hereford River Carnival
- Forestry Commission England
- New Grove Trust
- Ross Town Council

Business Sponsors:

- Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire
- Sunshine Radio
- Live 24-Seven
- Monnow Voice
- Forest of Dean & Wye Valley Tourism Association,
- Puzzlewood
- Tintern Old Station
- Wye Forest Retreats
- Visit Herefordshire

Other supportive organisations:

Artspace Cinderford
Foresters' Forest HLF Landscape Partnership
Freshwater Habitats Trust
Gwent Wildlife Trust
Herefordshire Wildlife Trust
Hydrocitizenship / Bath Spa University
Monmouthshire Countryside Service
OPAL (Open Air Laboratories)
Parish Grasslands Project
St Briavels Parish Council
Savoy Youth Theatre
Water City Bristol
Welsh Water
Wye and Usk Foundation

along with contributions from numerous volunteers and various schools and communities along the Wye Valley.