

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
7th March 2016

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBs

Purpose

To update members on recent and proposed work of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

FOR INFORMATION

Key Issues

- Andrew Blake, AONB Officer, represented the JAC in November 2015 at the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Annual General Meeting and the National Parks & AONB Chairmen's Conference.
- Rory Stewart, Defra Under Secretary of State, told the National Parks & AONB Chairmen's Conference that "Protected Landscapes are at the heart of what Defra try to do". The Government subsequently protected funding for England's National Parks and AONBs.
- The theme and dates for the next national AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference is 'natural beauty in relationship to the health and wellbeing of society' on 28th - 30th June 2016 at Lilleshall National Sports & Conferencing Centre, Newport, Shropshire.
- One of the Conference Field Trips on Wednesday 29th June may possibly be to the Wye Valley (subject to timings and logistics).
- Outstanding Week 2016 is scheduled for 17th -25th September 2016.
- The National Trust have published a report 'AONBs and Development' appraising the planning system in relation to AONBs, in liaison with the NAAONB.

Reasons

The NAAONB champions the 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as nationally protected landscapes cared for by locally accountable partnerships that promote and support effective long term management to keep these nationally designated landscapes special.

The NAAONB Board and core team work closely with Defra and Welsh Government to harness the collective experience, enthusiasm and goodwill of the AONB Family. They bring the AONB Family together as a cohesive entity providing leadership and strategic direction, celebrating the unique identity of the individual members and AONBs, and working with others to achieve shared objectives.

Implications

National Parks & AONB Chairmen's Conference

The NAAONB hosted Rory Stewart, Defra Under Secretary of State, at the AONB and National Park Chairmen's conference on 19th November 2015. Rory Stewart stated that "Protected Landscapes are at the heart of what Defra try to do" and that AONBs are "astonishingly, movingly and staggeringly beautiful areas...and we must not forget the genius of the words Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty". The Minister also witnessed the signing of

an Accord between the NAAONB and National Parks England. The Accord builds on past informal work and more recent closer collaboration, which resulted in the publication of ‘So much more than the View’ earlier in the year. The theme of the Chairmen’s conference was “Protected Landscapes: we mean business” with speakers, including AONB Chairmen, National Park and AONB chief officers and Produced in Kent, talking about the value and relevance of the National Park and AONB designations to local businesses. Attendees also heard about National Grid’s £24million Landscape Enhancement Initiative and Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) which will be launched shortly.

National Trust - AONBs and Development

The National Trust has been commissioning regular research reports since 2013 on particular aspects of the how the planning system is working. The latest of these reports looks at what is happening in AONBs.

The report recognises the Government’s commitment to protecting AONBs, but new research has identified some problems with how safeguards to prevent inappropriate development are being implemented in some places. The report suggests that policy may be fine but it’s the practice where the problem lies. It notes that

the planning system is supposed to steer development towards where it’s most appropriate and can provide most value while protecting other areas for their landscape or wildlife. But with local planning authorities losing staff and expertise and being pressured to make decisions in favour of development, that practice is sometimes falling below what it should be.

The report suggests a number of ways that practice could be improved, including a simple checklist flow-chart to assist local authorities in applying law and policy in AONBs:

[download the report on AONBs and Development \(PDF / 1.5MB\)](#)

Landscapes for Life Conference (L4L2016) – 28th -30th June 2016

The annual National AONB ‘Landscapes for Life’ Conference (L4L2016) will take place at Lilleshall National Sports & Conferencing Centre, Newport, Shropshire and will make the case for natural beauty in relationship to the health and wellbeing of society.

The programme is being finalised but the Wye Valley AONB may feature in several ways:-

- one of the Field Trips, on Wednesday 29th June, may possibly be to the Wye Valley. However this is subject to timings and logistics as the journey from Newport, Shropshire to the Wye Valley AONB will take in the region of 2 hours.
- The work of Greg Dunn’s PhD may form part of a workshop or plenary presentation
- mindSCAPE may form part of a workshop session or plenary presentation, and will certainly be included in the field trip, if that goes ahead.

Outstanding Week

The AONB Family’s inaugural ‘Outstanding Week’, coordinated by the NAAONB took place 19th - 27th September 2015. During the nine days, over 100 events took place in 34 AONBs highlighting the value and relevance of AONBs to both the UK’s economy, and the nation’s health and wellbeing. Plans are already underway for Outstanding Week 2016 on 17th - 25th September 2016. For more information see www.landscapesforlifeevents.org.uk

Background

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) is the charity (Number 1,158,871) and trusted voice for the AONB Family. It works to ensure that the natural beauty of all the 46 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, is understood and supported at all levels.