

Agenda Item

TECHNICAL OFFICERS' WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
7th March 2016

AONB REPORTS

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the AONB Unit and other partners.

FOR INFORMATION

The AONB Officer will give a brief verbal report on the following AONB initiatives, outlined below:-

- a. AONB Management Plan
- b. visits to Wye Valley AONB
- c. LEMUR+ placements
- d. mindSCAPE
- e. Wales Year of Adventure promotions
- f. Undergrounding electricity cables

a. AONB Management Plan 2015-2020

The consultation on the Environment Report for the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan has concluded that there are no further changes necessary. Therefore the Plan is complete and is being prepared for adoption and publication shortly.

b. visits to Wye Valley AONB

The Wye Valley AONB Unit has been approached to host two forthcoming visits:

- i) Diane McCrea, recently appointed chair of Natural Resources Wales (NRW), will visit the AONB in March along with NRW Principal Landscape Adviser and the NAAONB Chief Executive Officer, Howard Davies, who is also a NRW Board Member.
- ii) a delegation of six or seven people from the Europarc Germany will spend 2 days in AONB. Europarc is the European Federation of Protected Parks. This German project "Akteure aus Nationalen Naturlandschaften im internationalen Kompetenzsaustausch" aims to exchange knowledge, best-practice examples and experience. The group will be on a one-week "competences exchange trip" in mid-October focusing primarily on 'Regional development and sustainable tourism'. They will stay in the Wye Valley AONB for two days and will also be visiting the Cotswold AONB and Brecon Beacons National Park.

Key objectives of the project are:

- Strengthening the co-operation between the participating European parks
- Enhancing the competency and the motivation of park staff regarding international cooperation
- Increasing the expertise of German and European park staff in fields of park management and nature conservation through the exchange of expert knowledge, experiences and insights into best-practice examples
- Distributing international expertise to a broad audience in Germany and the participating countries
- Strengthening volunteer management in European parks

Other study trips will be visiting other areas and looking at a range of topics including:

- Education for sustainable development (e.g. Junior Ranger)
- Inclusion of people with disabilities (e.g. accessibility, volunteers with disabilities)
- Park Management (e.g. quality standards, evaluations)

At the end of the project the outcomes, experiences and lessons learned will be summarized by the participants and Europarc Germany in a publication and discussed in a conference.

c. LEMUR+ (Learning Environments in Marine, Urban & Rural areas) placements

Shortlisting and Interviews have been undertaken for both the 9 month and 4 month LEMUR+ placements. The 9 month placement commences in April and the 4 month placement will start in May.

All LEMUR+ trainee placements start with Hub Core Training led by the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust where trainees are introduced to the skills they will need for their placements, including species and habitat identification, public engagement and technology skills. The LEMUR+ trainees will be carrying out Phase 1 Habitat Surveys of The Doward and south Herefordshire part of the AONB, along with other tasks supporting the work of the Wye Valley AONB Unit.

d. mindSCAPE

The Big Lottery funded project is nearly half way through the four year programme. ArtSpace Cinderford continue to deliver the on-going activities with Dementia sufferers and their carers.

There will be presentation on the mindSCAPE project at the national AONB Landscapes for Life Conference 2016.

Nick Critchley, AONB Development Officer, will also be presenting evidence on the success of the mindSCAPE project to the National Assembly for Wales Cross Party Group on Rural Affairs on Tuesday 8th March 2016. Chaired by Llyr Huws Gruffydd AM and serviced by the Campaign for the Protection for Rural Wales, the theme of the meeting is “Health care in rural Wales - The challenges and opportunities”. Other presentations are by Dr Ruth Hussey - Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Dr Richard Lewis - National Professional Lead for Primary Care in Wales, NHS Wales/Welsh Government and James Radcliffe - Researcher.

Nationally there is mounting evidence demonstrating the contribution green spaces can make to mental and physical health and wellbeing. The Faculty of Public Health in association with Natural England recently published a statement giving examples of good practice and advice on how to work in partnership to develop and make best use of green spaces for health and wellbeing. See http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs_great_outdoors.pdf.

e. Wales Year of Adventure promotions

The Welsh Protected Landscapes, the 5 AONBs (Anglesey, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, Gower, Llŷn and Wye Valley) and 3 National Parks (Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia) are collaborating on a joint project to promote the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of Wales' protected landscapes, as part of Visit Wales' Year of Adventure.

The main aim of this project is to raise awareness, to a national and international, audience of the Protected Landscapes as year-round visitor destinations, highlighting their overall tourism offering. The project outputs include:

- Opportunities for businesses across all Protected Landscapes to engage with travel writers and photographers to promote the special landscapes of Wales as part of their tourism offer
- Encourage businesses to work together to produce a series of itineraries linking activities, special places, high quality produce and places to stay.
- Produce an online guide for potential visitors to all Protected Landscapes in Wales
- Produce nine Mini Adventure films (one for each Protected Landscape and a collective one) linking the four themes of stay, eat, attractions and activity to fit with Visit Wales promotion of 2015 as the Year of Adventure.

The on-line guides and films are due to be launched in April.

f. Undergrounding update

Since 2006 the Wye Valley AONB Unit has been working with the electricity Distribution Network Organisations (DNOs) to propose overhead powerlines for undergrounding within the AONB. Initially the AONB Unit worked with Central Networks and later with Western Power Distribution, who then took over Central Networks, so now covers South Wales, the Midlands and the South West of England and consequently is the sole DNO for the Wye Valley AONB. Each DNO has a limited budget to spend on undergrounding schemes in Protected Landscapes.

In the current 5 year period for undergrounding powerlines Western Power Distribution have £1.3 million for South Wales and £2.4 million for the West Midlands. The cost of placing 33Kv and larger power cables underground is generally too expensive, so most schemes proposed and considered are 11Kv (3 wires on wooden poles feeding villages, hamlets and individual properties), and lower voltage powerlines. Proposed schemes are considered by Western Power and the area steering groups, which include Protected Landscape staff. Evaluation criteria is based on the visual impact of the power cables, the practicality of undertaking the undergrounding work and the cost, with some rationing of schemes to ensure all Protected Landscapes have the opportunity to benefit.

In the Wye Valley AONB, since 2006, 35 schemes have so far been put forward, varying in length from 100 meters to 3.3 km. The average length of proposed schemes is just under 1.1 km. 10 schemes have been proposed in Monmouthshire, 7 in Gloucestershire and 18 in Herefordshire. Of these 9 schemes have been successfully completed to date with an estimated cost of just over £600,000. A total length of 7.6km of cable has been moved underground. The average length of a successful scheme is just under 850m.

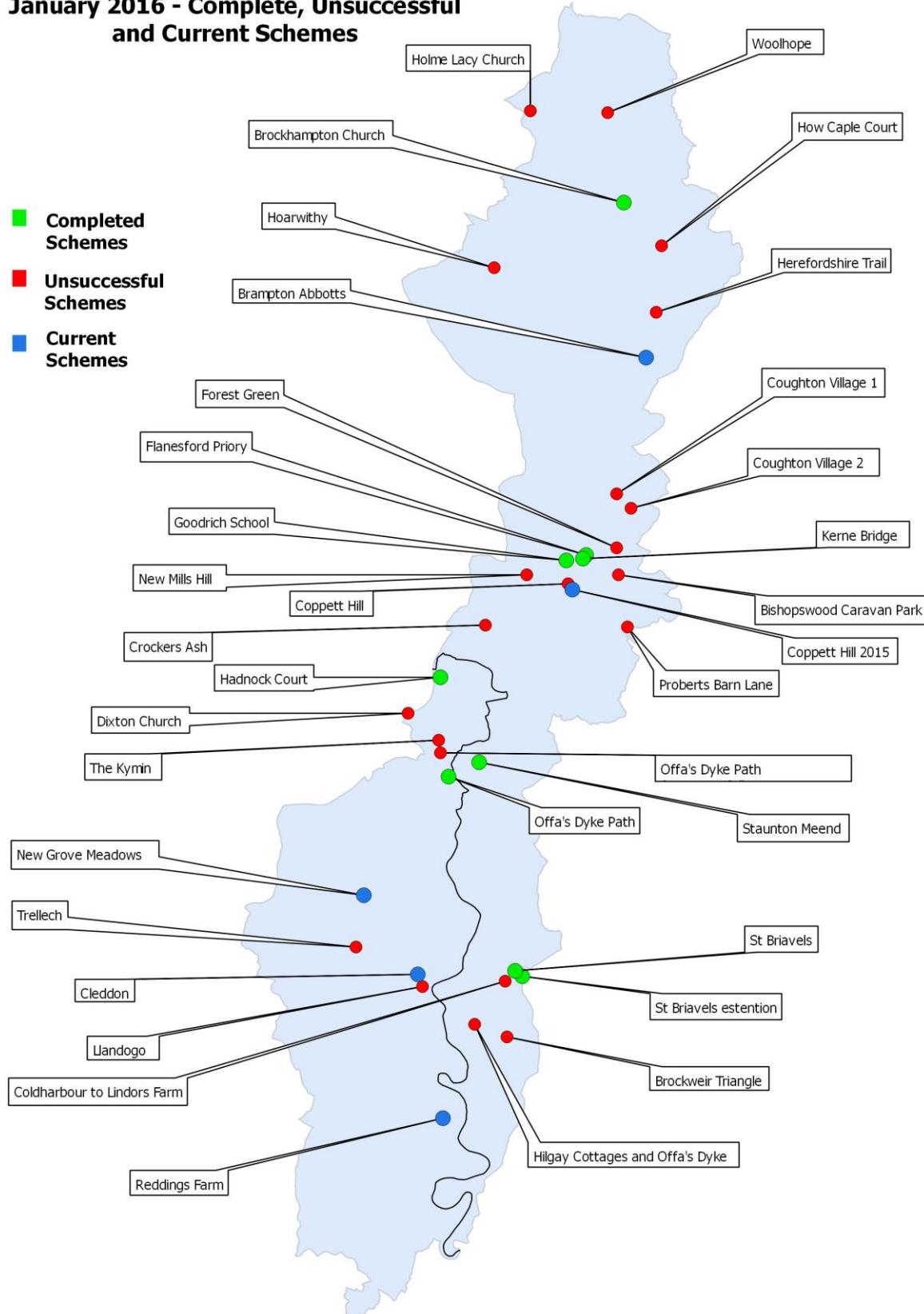
Undergrounding schemes	total length	estimated cost
Monmouthshire 2	2,665m	£185,000
Gloucestershire 3	2,255m	£150,000
Herefordshire 4	2,680m	£265,000
total 9	7,600m	£600,000

Of the 35 schemes proposed, 21 have either been rejected or failed. Schemes have failed for a number of reasons including failure to agree routes or wayleaves with landowners, the lack of a suitable route for the underground cables and/or the close proximity of other intrusive features which lessen the landscape benefit of undergrounding the cables (eg. phone wires using the same poles). The length of schemes rejected or failed is 24.8km, averaging 1.18km per proposal. 5 schemes have failed in Monmouthshire, 4 in Gloucestershire and 12 in Herefordshire.

A further 5 schemes are currently being considered by Western Power, with a length totalling 5.9km. 3 of these are in Monmouthshire (2,045m) and 2 in Herefordshire (3,810m). Another 13 locations, 4 in Monmouthshire, 1 in Gloucestershire and 8 in Herefordshire, have so far been identified for more detailed future investigation.

See attached maps.

Western Power Powerline Undergrounding
January 2016 - Complete, Unsuccessful
and Current Schemes



Western Power Powerline Undergrounding January 2016 - Current and Potential Schemes

■ Current Schemes

■ Potential Schemes

