

## **NATIONAL LANDSCAPE / AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW**

### ***Purpose***

To outline the revised programme for the preparation and publication of the Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

### ***Recommendations***

That the JAC

- A. Provides comment on the proposed draft Vision for the Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan.
- B. Endorses the revised programme for the review and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2026-2031.

### ***Key Issues***

- The existing Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) needs to be reviewed, under the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act Section 89, by the end of 2026.
- The Management Plan review programme was endorsed in November 2024.
- There has been some slight slippage in the review programme but the deadline remains unchanged in the revised timetable which is appended.
- The proposed Vision for the new Wye Valley National Landscape / AONB Management Plan is outlined below and comments are welcome before consolidation into the Public Consultation Draft version.

### ***Reasons***

Sections 89-90 of the Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 require local authorities to review adopted and published AONB Management Plans at intervals of not more than five years. The CROW Act also requires local authorities to 'act jointly' in the preparation and review of AONB Management Plans.

The review of the current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2021-2026) must be complete by the end of 2026. In the current Plan it was recognised that a 'full review' will be applicable for the preparation of the next Plan (2026-2031).

### ***Implications***

Appended below is the revised programme for the Management Plan review. There have been delays in the preparation of the draft Management Plan due to other work pressures within the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. The original timetable had capacity for some slippage and the amended timetable will enable completion of the Management Plan within the original deadline of the next 12 months. It is proposed that the National Landscape Partnership Winter Seminar is utilised and incorporated as part of the Public Consultation process. It will enable a range of stakeholders to engage face to face as part of the public consultation.

The proposed Vision for the National Landscape Management Plan 2026-2031 is as follows:-

The 20-year vision for the Wye Valley National Landscape is:-

- **Nature is flourishing and connected**, with more, better and joined-up grassland, wetland and tree cover, along with a healthy River Wye and tributaries.
- **The resilient landscape** stores more carbon and water and vibrant soils sustain nature friendly farm businesses producing nutrient dense food.
- **The Outstanding Natural Beauty and Special Qualities** continue to inspire people to conserve and enhance them.
- **Everyone can experience and care for the National Landscape**, with inclusive access and more sustainable ways to visit and get around.
- **Communities and businesses thrive** with a nature positive, low-carbon rural economy providing local skilled work.

The previous vision for the 2021-2026 Plan is appended below.

### ***Background***

The CRow Act 2000 (Sections 89 and 90) require local authorities to publish AONB Management Plans, at not more than five years intervals, which formulate their policy for the management of their AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. The current Management Plan 2021-2026 is available on the National Landscape website <https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/management-plans/>

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Herefordshire Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Monmouthshire County Council formally delegates the publishing, reviewing and monitoring of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan to the AONB Partnership. This was reiterated and formally endorsed by the Joint Advisory Committee in November 2024.

## **Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2021-2026**

### **2.2 The Vision for the Wye Valley AONB**

2.2.1 The following was developed for the 2009-14 AONB Management Plan as a 20 year vision and remains a true encapsulation of how we want the AONB to be in 15 years' time and beyond:-

*The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be a landscape*

- *that continues to evoke inspiration in a wide range of people*
- *where some degree of change is accepted and its impacts accommodated through positive management including effective adaptation to and mitigation of climate change*
- *where the distinctive mix of steep valley sides and rolling hills, covered with ancient and semi-natural woodland, mixed farmland, and scattered settlement dominate the landscape along with the meandering river*
- *where the natural and heritage assets are in good order, well-understood and accessible where appropriate, in fully compatible uses and adapted and changed in ways which respect and enhance their significance*
- *with a robust mosaic of inter-connected semi natural habitats for native wildlife, particularly around grassland, wetland and woodland*
- *providing functioning services and resources for society, including flood storage, food, timber, tourism and minerals*
- *which provides work for local people, who make good use of the varied resources the area has to offer*
- *where both visitors and residents are able to enjoy the area, particularly for sustainable tourism, recreation and informed appreciation of the historic and natural environment, with minimal conflict or disturbance from other users*
- *where association with the Wye Valley continues to benefit the surrounding villages, market towns and counties*
- *supported by the good will, pride and endeavour of local people, visitors, and the public, private and voluntary sectors*
- *worthy of its designation as an internationally important protected landscape.*