

NATIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATES

Purpose

To advise members of activities of the National Landscapes Association, Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) and the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.

FOR INFORMATION

Below are update reports on the National Landscapes Association, Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) and National Landscape Team: -

- a. National Landscapes Association (NLA)
 - i. Lead Officers' Meeting [11th-12th Feb]
 - ii. Annual Conference, Norwich [7th-9th July]
- b. Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW)
 - i. independent Task and Finish Group
 - ii. Manifesto
 - iii. Chair
- c. Wye Valley National Landscape Team
 - i. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects/awards
 - ii. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails

a. **National Landscapes Association (NLA)** <https://www.national-landscapes.org.uk/>

i. **Lead Officers' Meeting [11th-12th Feb]**

National Landscape lead officers from across England, Wales & Northern Ireland met in Birmingham with NLA colleagues and discussed a range of issues to help steer NLA work for 2026/7. Topics included Governance and purposes; Organisational resilience; and the Office for Environmental Protection - Protected Landscapes Review.

ii. **Annual Conference, Norwich [7th-9th July]**

The National Landscapes Annual Conference 2026 will be at University of East Anglia, Norwich from 7th – 9th July 2026. The Conference will explore the role of National Landscapes as drivers of vitality in their areas. Ticket sales are due to open shortly. For more information see <https://www.national-landscapes-conference.org.uk/>

b. Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) <https://landscapeswales.org.uk/>

i. Independent Task and Finish Group

Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales (TCLW) has convened a Task and Finish Group to review the legislative and governance arrangements for Designated Landscapes in Wales, namely National Parks and National Landscapes. The group comprises independent and experienced members not directly involved day-to-day in Designated Landscape management bodies. The review responds to a growing recognition that existing frameworks may not be fully aligned with contemporary Welsh ambitions for nature recovery, climate resilience, wellbeing, equity, and long-term stewardship. The questions arisen include: Why is improvement needed? What are the real issues at play? Where are the blockers, and can they be worked around? The review recognises that challenges may arise not only from legislative limitations, but also from:- how existing duties are interpreted, applied, and enforced, including evidence that current legislation may already allow more flexibility than is widely understood, but that this is unevenly implemented; and Capacity, culture, and resourcing constraints. At the TCLW meeting in April, draft recommendations will be presented for discussion. The review aims to support clear, ambitious, and implementable recommendations that strengthen the long-term contribution of Designated Landscapes to Wales. For more information see: <https://landscapeswales.org.uk/reviewing-wales-designated-landscapes/>

ii. Manifesto

In anticipation of the Welsh Government elections in May, TCLW has produced a Manifesto, which along with the outcome of the above work will help discussions with any new administration following the Senedd elections. See <https://landscapeswales.org.uk/a-manifesto-from-tirweddau-cymru-landscapes-wales/>

ii. Chair

In June Andrew Blake will step down as chair of TCLW following a 2 year term. Catherine Mealing-Jones, CEO of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park will succeed him.

c. Wye Valley National Landscape Team <https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/>

i. National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects

The three projects funded through the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI), between Walford and Marstow have completed their first year of operation. LEI work completed to date includes the following Hedgerows:

- 1,495m new hedgerow
- 296m gapping up
- 35 standard hedgerow trees

Species-rich grassland and meadows:

- 1.73ha species-rich grassland creation

Trees, Woodlands & Orchards:

- 6 standard & parkland trees planted
- 5 orchard trees planted

Wetlands and Natural Flood Management

- 1 pond created
- 8 leaky dams
- 115m bund & de-silted scrape

ii. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Strategy & Steering Group

The Tracks and Trails Steering Group has received the audit report from Earth Science Partnership (ESP) on the Unclassified County Roads - Tintern and Whitebrook Pilot Areas. The report surveyed 11km of unsealed unclassified roads around Tintern and Whitebrook and is available to download from the Wye Valley National Landscape website:

<https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ESP.9264.4328-Rev2-Wye-Valley-Final-07.10.25.pdf>

The Steering Group held a workshop on the report in December with further discussions at their meeting in February, to prioritise tasks for the year ahead. Based on the report, a condition-based shortlist of UCRs is being drawn up for targeted work, along with legal clarification on a range of options and interventions. There is a recognised need to create a clear information resource to guide the public and users on understanding legal trail usage and how and when to report illegal use and issues. It is intended that this will be available shortly. However funding for significant interventions remains undetermined and further costings will be needed to take agreed options forward. Further and on-going engagement with the public, users, the Police and landowners is to be arranged.

Notes of the meetings, and subsequent/further updates, are published here:

<https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-projects/lowerwyetracksandtrails/>