

ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

To present the annual reports for 2025/26 on the achievements of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcome the Annual Report on Wye Valley National Landscape Team achievements for 2025/26

Key Issues

- The 2025/26 Annual Report on the Work Programme is appended for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.
- High levels of achievement were maintained across nature recovery, climate resilience, sustainable land management, community engagement and access.
- The appended map and Infographic identify the spread of achievements both spatially and thematically.
- The Wye Valley National Landscape Team was consolidated in 2025/26 with the new FIPL and Ffermio Bro Officers joining the Team.
- The Team worked well together to secure full spend of all available budgets, helping partners further the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the outstanding natural beauty of the National Landscape.
- The summary financial report will be presented at the November JAC.

Reasons

The Work Programme Report for 2025/26 tabulates the achievements of the National Landscape Team during the period. The Work Programme Annual Report is also presented to DEFRA and Welsh Government as contributory evidence to the National Landscape Partnership annual grant claims to the two government core funding partners.

Implications

The Wye Valley National Landscape Team delivered a strong and varied programme of work during 2025-26, achieving significant outcomes for nature recovery, climate resilience, sustainable land management, community engagement and access. Across the year, the Team successfully managed major grant programmes, strengthened partnerships with farmers, landowners, communities and local authorities, and continued to deliver practical improvements across the National Landscape.

Land management support was a major area of achievement. The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme fully spent its £339,063 allocation, supporting 33 projects, involving

118 farmers and benefiting 326 ha of land (10% of the National Landscape). In Wales, the first year of Ffermio Bro was successfully launched and delivered, with its £98,000 budget fully spent and practical landscape-scale outcomes including new and restored hedgerows, woodland enhancement, riparian corridor improvements, leaky dams, ponds and drystone wall repairs. The Wye Adapt to Climate Change programme also expanded climate adaptation and natural flood management work, providing 18 farms with site-specific advice and supporting delivery of ponds, leaky dams, meadow restoration, hedge planting, fencing, tree planting and herbal ley creation. Similar collaborations and achievements were developed through the 3 National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) projects.

The Team made important progress on biodiversity and habitat restoration. The Woodland Butterfly Species Action Plan was published and adopted, the Water Crowfoot Species Action Plan was drafted, and further work delivered the Noble Chafer, Hedgehog and Bumblebee Species Action Plans, including bespoke surveys, habitat creation, workshops and public engagement. Invasive non-native species (INNS) control remained a significant focus, with treatment of Japanese Knotweed, American Skunk Cabbage and Cherry Laurel, alongside volunteer action on Himalayan Balsam. At Cleddon Bog SSSI, peatland restoration continued through scrub clearance, tree removal, conservation grazing and updated vegetation monitoring, confirming the site's continuing high conservation value.

Community participation and public engagement were also strong. Volunteers contributed 2,940 hours across 240 work days, while Young Adventurers achieved 82 attendances by young people who took part in activities helping to build their skills, confidence and connection with the landscape. The 50th anniversary of the Wye Valley Walk was celebrated through a new official guidebook, guided walks of the whole route, benches, a public transport map, a major exhibition and a growing passport scheme. Access and inclusion were improved through 14 Access for All projects and the successful resurfacing of 240 m of path at Trellech Common, making the landscape easier to enjoy for residents and visitors with a wider range of mobility needs.

Strategically, the Team strengthened the foundations for future delivery. The Nature Recovery Plan was completed and approved, the Management Plan review progressed, governance and partnership arrangements were supported, and all budgets were spent and claimed within required thresholds. The submission of an Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a 10-year Landscape Connections initiative provides a major future opportunity to work at scale with farmers, landowners and communities to restore nature, improve water quality and strengthen people's relationship with the Wye Valley National Landscape.

Below is a map showing the distribution of habitat and landscape management project work by the Team during 2025/26. These outputs are now collated on the Wye Valley National Landscape Team Geographical Information System (GIS) which aids spatial collaboration and targeting, as well as reporting to funders. This data was also used to create the Infographic, below, that highlights some of these outcomes thematically.

The full table of achievements on the Work Programme is appended as the 2025/26 Annual Report for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team. The summary financial report will be presented at the November JAC, but full spend was secured on all available budgets helping partners further the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the outstanding natural beauty of the National Landscape.

Wye Valley National Landscape
Habitat and Landscape Project Work
2025/26

