

PARTNER AND NATIONAL LANDSCAPE TEAM PROGRESS REPORTS AND UPDATES

Purpose

To advise members of activity of the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and other local and national partners.

FOR INFORMATION

Below are update reports on the following National Landscape Team other local and national partner initiatives: -

1. National Landscapes Association
 - National Landscape Annual Conference, Norwich [7th-9th July]
 - Protected Landscapes APPG
2. Young Adventurers
3. Wye Valley National Landscape Volunteers
4. Priority Species Update
5. Wye Adapt to Climate Change project
6. Lower Wye Tracks & Trails Steering Group
7. Conservation Grazing

1. National Landscapes Association (NLA)

- **National Landscapes Annual Conference 2026, Norwich [7th-9th July]**

The 2026 conference theme is 'Vitality of Place', exploring the role of National Landscapes as drivers of vitality in their areas. Natural beauty, biodiversity, and cultural heritage of our finest landscapes underpin thriving, resilient communities.

A strong contingent from the Wye Valley National Landscape are attending. The full programme is available here: <https://www.national-landscapes-conference.org.uk/programme>.

Presentations and discussions will revolve around how National Landscapes are not only places of outstanding natural value; they are also economic systems, supporting livelihoods, attracting investment, and shaping the wellbeing of millions of people. The conference will be an exploration of the opportunity and challenge of creating vitality whilst navigating competing priorities and the trading of short-term gains against the wellbeing of future generations.

- **Protected Landscapes All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)**

Westminster hosts a wide range of All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs). The Protected Landscapes APPG met on 1st July 2026 with the NLA's Bruce Winney, Head of Policy, and Ruth Colbridge, Communications Manager (Public Affairs) in attendance.

Ensuring the Protected Landscapes duty is robust and not watered down was raised as a key priority, with Parliamentarians pressing for examples of where it has helped. Examples were given of work with a water company in Yorkshire Dales National Park, and what happens when it is not followed such as the Manningtree railway station car park in Dedham Vale National Landscape. Other topics that came up from the MPs were governance, with DEFRA committed to legislative change but also looking at other things, such as diversity that don't need legislation, and an Access Green Paper.

Campaign for National Parks service the APPG and brought with them four youth ambassadors who discussed barriers to access, which focused on lack of public transport and lack of familiarity with Protected Landscapes.

The NLA have produced an update Briefing on the Protected Landscapes duty (appended below) and also provided MPS with information about Generation Green and Nature Calling, demonstrating how National Landscapes are supporting more young people to access these outstanding places.

2. Wye Valley National Landscape Youth Adventurers

Lucinda James, Wye Valley National Landscape Community Links Officer, organised a range of activities over the past couple of months with many children attending who have Special Educational Needs (SEN):-

- **March - Bush Craft at Wyesham Community Woodland, Monmouth.**



This session we worked with Wyesham Community Woodland Project to use their campfire and shelter, which as we have a very wet start to the year, was very much needed! The children whittled mushroom keyrings and prepared a vegetable stew for lunch, this followed by chocolate bananas and hot chocolate.

- **April - Bush Craft session at Beares Farm, St Briavels.**



For this session we were whittling hazel walking sticks and learning about the different uses of sticks and how we coppice trees. We also made savoury and sweet toasties on the fire.

- **May - Bird Box Making with Chepstow Artspace at the Babington Centre, Trellech.**



During this activity the children built their own bird boxes, learnt some helpful tips to encourage birds into their own gardens. Once the birdboxes were built the children had the opportunity to decorate them ready to be erected at home.

- **June - Wildlife ID Walk with Gwent Wildlife Trust @ Pentwyn Farm Nature Reserve.**



For this activity we took a relaxed stroll through the meadows at Pentwyn Farm looking at different species of wildflowers, insects and trees on the reserve. The children were encouraged to identify each species using ID sheets and phone apps (seek and Obsidentify).

3. Wye Valley National Landscape Volunteers

Our volunteers have been busy over the past couple of months tackling a variety of different tasks and projects. We have run 6 volunteer task days and 1 training day which has clocked up **387 hours of volunteer** work in just 4 month!

- **March 26th- Staunton Meend Common- 14 Volunteers**



Our volunteers were out clearing birch which has established due to the lack of management over the recent years. The Staunton Meend Restoration project is now tackling the birch and bracken to help restore the heathland.

- **April 9th Bendith, Brampton Abbots- 7 volunteers**



A small group of volunteers helped the WVNL team in planting of a shelter belt which comprised of 312 trees (see SAP update below)

- **April 16th, St Marys Church, Tintern- Graveyard Restoration- 17 volunteers**



This was our second year helping the Lower Wye Valley Building Preservation Trust manage and maintain the graveyard area at St Mary's, Tintern. This included rebuilding 4 sections of fallen drystone wall, removing saplings and clearing overgrown areas.

- **April 30th, Prickly Patch Hedgehog Rescue Centre- Painting- 4 volunteers.**



Our volunteers answered an SOS call from the Prickly Patch team to get the rescue centre treated following a dry period and before the official launch on the 8th May.

- **May 14th, Beacon Hill- Nightjar Monitoring Training- 8 volunteers**

This year we have launch a Nightjar monitoring project at Beacon Hill, 8 volunteers we trained on listening and identifying Nightjars and monitor their behaviour. The project is led by Nightjar enthusiasts Ben Locke and Hugh Mainstree who have been monitoring Nightjar activity in the Forest of Dean for many years. Volunteers learned how to identify Nightjars and record their movements and behaviour to try and identify nest locations at Beacon Hill. The monitoring takes place at dusk from late May until mid/ late August. Once a nest site is located, trained ringer Rob Husband will attempt to catch, ring and attach a GPS device to track their movements. Audio Moth devices are also used to record any churring from dusk and until dawn. Monitoring continues throughout the summer until August, when Nightjar chicks fledge.

- **May 21st, Angidy Pools- Scything- 20 volunteers**



Volunteers were split between the 2 pools, taking it in turns to scythe the area and remove the cuttings to reduce the nutrients returning to the soil. There was a noticeable increase in wildflowers following years of management.

- **June 18th, Brockweir- Himalayan Balsam Control- 17 volunteers**



This was our 4th year of pulling Balsam at the Brockweir site, it was noticeable that the amount of Balsam had reduced enabling us to tackle a second section which we have been unable to tackle in the past on the same day.

4. Priority Species Project updates

Over the past few months, the WVNLC team has made significant progress across the Priority Species Project, delivering the 4 adopted Species Action Plans (SAPs) through a range of habitat creation, monitoring, education, and community engagement activities throughout the Wye Valley National Landscape.

Orchard SAP - Habitat creation and enhancement

- **Bendith tree planting and orchard creation**



Habitat enhancement works at Bendith have now been successfully completed. A new shelter belt has been created, consisting of 312 newly planted trees, protected by 120 metres of sheep-netted fencing and an aluminium access gate. Volunteers supported the planting effort, contributing their time and enthusiasm to establish this important new habitat feature. Alongside the shelter belt, members of the WVNLC team planted a new traditional orchard, comprising 25 mixed apple trees. This orchard will provide valuable habitat, supporting a wide range of species including pollinators, birds, and small mammals, while also contributing to the conservation of traditional landscape features.

Hedgehog SAP - Conservation and Community Engagement

- **Hedgehog House Building Workshop- The Narth:**

The WVNLC team hosted a successful hedgehog house building workshop in The Narth, engaging local families in practical conservation action. A total of 14 families attended, resulting in 14 new hedgehog habitats being created within gardens across the local area.

The workshop provided an opportunity to educate families about the challenges facing hedgehogs and share practical actions they can take at home and within their communities to support hedgehog recovery, including improving habitat connectivity and creating wildlife-friendly gardens.



One attendee shared their experience of the workshop through a blog post:

<https://www.thewildlifenomad.com/blog/building-homes-a-hedgehog-workshop-in-the-wye-valley>

- **Hedgehog Monitoring – Howle Hill, Ross-on-Wye**

The WVNLT team worked with a local landowner to carry out a hedgehog monitoring project at Howle Hill, Ross-on-Wye. Monitoring equipment was deployed across the site, including 3 wildlife cameras and 9 hedgehog tracking tunnels, to investigate potential hedgehog presence.

Unfortunately, no hedgehog evidence was recorded during the monitoring period. However, the project has provided useful baseline information, supported wider understanding of local hedgehog distribution, and helped build relationships with landowners interested in supporting priority species conservation.

- **Little Dewchurch Primary School Hedgehog Monitoring Project**

In May, the WVNLT team delivered a hedgehog monitoring project with Little Dewchurch Primary School. A classroom session was provided to educate students about hedgehog ecology, conservation, and practical actions they can take to help protect the species.

The school then received hedgehog monitoring equipment, allowing pupils to collect data and investigate hedgehog activity both on school grounds and within their own gardens in the surrounding community. The project directly engaged with 50 children at Little Dewchurch Primary School, with the impact extending further into the local community through families participating in hedgehog monitoring at home, reaching an estimated additional 20 family members and encouraging wider awareness and action for hedgehog conservation.

The project proved a success, recording evidence of 4 hedgehogs. The work concluded with a celebration assembly, with Lorraine from the Monmouth Hedgehog First Response Unit attending as a guest speaker to celebrate the students' achievements and contribution to conservation.



Bumblebee SAP - Pollinator Engagement and Monitoring

- **Wye Valley River Festival – Telling the Bees Partnership:**

The WVNL Team attended the Wye Valley River Festival in Monmouth, working in partnership with Telling the Bees to promote the importance of wildflowers and pollinator conservation.

The team hosted wildflower seed bomb making, engaging festival attendees in a hands-on activity to support pollinators. Locally sourced Herefordshire wildflower seeds were also donated to Telling the Bees, who distributed seed packets alongside instructions for making seed bombs following their performances, helping extend the reach of the project and encouraging people to create pollinator-friendly spaces at home.

- **Bumblebee Refresher workshop- Bartonsham Meadows**

The WVNL team hosted a bumblebee refresher workshop at Bartonsham Meadows in May, led by Richard Comont from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

Members of the Friends of Bartonsham Meadows attended the session to refresh their identification skills and learn new techniques for safely catching and identifying bumblebees in the field. The event strengthened local recording skills and will support ongoing pollinator monitoring efforts across the Wye Valley.



Woodland Butterfly SAP - Walk and talk

- **Little Doward Wood**

The WVNL team hosted a woodland butterfly walk and talk session at Little Doward Wood, led by Toby Fountain from Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. The event was well attended, with participants identifying 9 different butterfly species during the session. Toby shared extensive knowledge about woodland butterfly ecology, the importance of appropriate woodland management for supporting butterfly populations, and ways people can encourage butterflies and other wildlife into their own gardens.

The session successfully combined species identification, habitat management advice, and public engagement, increasing awareness of the importance of managing woodland habitats for priority butterfly species.



5. **'Wye Adapt to Climate Change?' Project Update**

Over the past few months work has continued to build a strong pipeline of natural flood management and habitat restoration projects across the Wye catchment, with a focus on engaging landowners and progressing projects towards delivery.

Holly Williams is the Wye Adapt to Climate Change Project Officer, seconded to the Wye Valley National Landscape from Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, as part of the 3 year project supported by the National Lottery Climate Action Fund.

A total of 13 farm visits have been completed, including visits to both new holdings and existing project sites. These visits have been used to identify opportunities for climate resilience and habitat enhancement, strengthen relationships with landowners, and progress the design and implementation of on-farm interventions. Several habitat creation projects are expected to be delivered over the summer, including the creation of 16+ ponds, and current activity is mostly focused on securing the necessary consents and permissions required for the work to take place. The ponds will deliver multiple benefits by creating valuable wetland habitat for wildlife while also contributing to natural flood management by increasing water storage within the landscape.



A cross-slope hedge was planted in March in the Monnow catchment, which will contribute to Natural Flood Management through intercepting water and increases habitat connectivity.

6. Lower Wye Valley Tracks & Trails Project

The Tracks & Trails Steering Group met on 15th April with a site visit to Tintern Road on Friday 22nd May. The group agreed on 4 priority routes out of the Route Audit of Unclassified County Roads (UCRs) conducted in 2025. These are Grove Road (Whitebrook), the Maypole Road cluster (Whitebrook), Tintern Road (Tintern), and Chapel Hill Road (Tintern), largely based on route condition but align with concerns raised by local residents.

A monitoring trial project is being investigated using AI cameras on Tintern Road and Grove Road to gather objective usage data, which will differentiate between user types and direction of travel. New signage will also be progressed on the four priority routes to help clarify user rights and enforcement. The sign designs are largely complete and the exact sign locations and installation requirements are being determined.

A new UCR information hub is in development to be hosted on the Wye Valley National Landscape website. This will provide clear, accessible information on UCRs, their history, legal status, and how to report issues.

A 12 month Action Plan is also being finalised in advance of public workshops proposed after the summer holiday period to update residents and gather support for future management actions.

The site visit to Tintern Road, one of the priority UCRs, allowed Steering Group members and local councillors to walk from the north (Whitelye) south, finishing at the Wye Valley Hotel in Tintern. They viewed the varying condition and width constraints of the route and discussed the types of mitigation measures that could be put in place if funding was available, they were also able to speak with a local resident about usage, the impacts of flooding and recent mitigation work.

7. Conservation Grazing on Cleddon Bog and Beacon Hill

Cattle are back on Cleddon Bog SSSI and Beacon Hill heathland in Monmouthshire, lending a helping hoof to restore and protect these special landscapes.

On Beacon Hill 8 Australian Lowline cattle arrived on site on May 8 and will spend the spring and summer months grazing the heathland as part of the ongoing conservation project in partnership with Natural Resources Wales. Now in its fourth year, the conservation grazing project is proving a natural and effective way to manage the heathland habitat.

Heathlands like Beacon Hill are rich in biodiversity but need active management to survive. Without grazing, scrub can quickly encroach, shading out smaller plants and reducing the diversity that makes these habitats so valuable. By nibbling away at fast-growing invasive plants, the cattle help prevent these species from taking over, allowing a wider variety of plants and wildlife to thrive.



This year's team of Lowline cattle – including Hamish, Onyx, Geoff, Sam, Banana and Tuesday – are perfectly suited to the job. Originally from Australia, Lowline cattle are hardy, docile and well adapted to conservation grazing. Their smaller size reduces the risk of soil compaction and damage to sensitive soils, while their varied grazing habits help create a more diverse mix of vegetation and ensure the site is not overgrazed.

Grazing Management Ltd, run by Alex and Emily Crawley, provide the grazing services at both Beacon Hill and Cleddon Bog SSSI. For more info on our management of Cleddon Bog

see <https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/conservation-grazing-at-cleddon-bog/> and for info in Grazing Management Ltd see <https://grazingmanagement.co.uk/> .

Grazing Management Ltd also have grazing agreements with a range of landowners covering about 175ha, in and around the Wye Valley National Landscape, including:-

- Staunton Meend, Gloucestershire for Staunton Parish Council
- Parkend Community Orchard, Gloucestershire
- Various private landowners in Hewelsfield & St Briavels, Gloucestershire and Old-Lands Estate, Dingestow, Monmouthshire.