

TECHNICAL OFFICERS'
WORKING PARTY REPORT

WYE VALLEY AONB
JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4th July 2016

ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

To present the table of achievements for the Wye Valley AONB Unit and the Annual Report on contracted Planning consultants' work for the AONB Unit for 2015/16.

Recommendations

That the JAC welcome the Annual Reports of AONB achievements for 2015/16

Key Issues

- The 2015/16 Work Programme Report for the AONB Unit is appended, along with a summary financial report below.
- Despite a number of staffing issues and illness the AONB Unit has maintained a high standard of activity and achievement.
- Worcestershire County Council Planning department were contracted to provide advice to the AONB Unit on strategic planning documents and development issues, and where necessary prepare appropriate responses for the AONB Unit. The annual report for the contracted work is appended.
- The expectation that the AONB Unit, on behalf of the AONB Partnership, comments on Planning Applications has increased in recent years as has the number of pre-application enquiries.

Reasons

The Work Programme Report for the AONB Unit 2015/16 lists the achievements of the AONB Unit and is the basis of the AONB Partnership Annual Report. The Work Programme Report has been presented to Defra and Natural Resources Wales as part of the annual grant claims to the two central government funding partners.

The number of planning application in 2015/16 has significantly increased compared to the previous year. Similarly the expectation and number of requests for the AONB Unit to respond to either current planning applications, on behalf of the AONB Partnership, or to give pre-application advice has continued to increase. This may in part be due to pressures on the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and the fact that the LPAs have started charging for pre-application advice.

Implications

The continuing partnership with the Malvern Hills AONB over the use of The Planning Company has enabled a co-ordinated approach to be taken to strategic consultations in Herefordshire, Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire relating to the two AONBs. The new contract with Worcestershire County Council Planning Department is working well.

There are a number of highlights outlined in the 2015/16 table of achievements for the AONB Unit Work Programme Report. The AONB Management Plan is complete and currently going

through the final adoption stage. The development of the Wye Valley River Festival engaged local communities and levered resources into the area to increase people’s appreciation and understanding of the area. The third cohort of Youth Rangers started (supported with a range of funding), and the mindSCAPE project (with Big Lottery funding) has gone from strength to strength. The AONB Unit has maintained appropriate levels of activity and output despite various staff being affected by ill health and necessitating prolonged absences from work.

Wye Valley AONB Unit Accounts 2015-2016		2014/15	2015/16
Income		£	£
	Local Authorities core contributions	51,850	50,848
	Defra AONB grant	122,001	122,001
	Natural Resources Wales Grant	52,210	52,211
	Sustainable Development Fund	70,000	61,000
	Income from other sources	201,416	115,944
	TOTAL	497,477	402,004
Expenditure			
	Staff costs	181,893	179,713
	Unit Operating costs	23,117	24,042
	Core Initiatives	7,649	3,388
	AONB Projects	20,566	26,400
	Sustainable Development Fund	70,332	61,000
	Partnership projects	193,920	107,462
	TOTAL	497,477	402,004

