

WYE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)

AONB Unit Work Programme Report for 2015/2016

Task for AONB Unit	Work Progressed / Achieved	Key Officer/s (see footer)	By when
<p>AONB Management Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicise and distribute Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Monitor and review Management Plan Achieve - average 100 downloads of Plan from website per annum and average 10 requests for printed copies of Plan per annum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) completed Consultation on the Environment Report concluded that there are no further changes necessary. Finalised AONB Management Plan approved by JAC Local Authority adoption processes commenced Management Plan design for publication commenced 	AONBO	Mar 2016
<p>AONB Strategy & Development Advisor Extend contract for year to support AONB Officer. Commenting on Planning Applications and strategic planning documents. Annually monitor and review development trends and the approach taken by planning authorities to issues that affect the AONB, including the cumulative impact of small scale development. Annually engage in development and consultation stages of at least 1 national or local strategy or Local Development Frameworks/Plan to ensure policy results in landscape and biodiversity gain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract commenced with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Planning Department, shared with Malvern Hills AONB Partnership. 6 monthly review meetings held. Over the year, WCC officers have developed their knowledge base and increased their familiarity and confidence in responding to strategy documents and planning application consultations on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB. Planning applications considered 274, responses drafted 17. 3 Planning appeals have followed AONB Unit objections to application. 2 were upheld in favour of the AONB, 1 permitted. 	AONBO	March 2016
<p>AONB Farming Awards Promote & publicise 9th Awards. For farmers and landowners to promote best practice in land management that makes an outstanding contribution to conserving or enhancing the features, special qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek sponsorship for the AONB Farming Awards from local businesses, supermarkets etc. Site visits of all farm entries for short-listing Site visits by the judges to the short-listed farms for the AONB Farming Awards 2015 Present the AONB Farming Awards 2015 prizes at the Monmouthshire Show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment visits made to farms by AONB Development Officer and Judging Panel visited 4 shortlisted farms. Cllr Phil Cutter presented Ann and Jim Herbert, of Lewstone Farm Herefordshire, with the first prize of £400, the Farming Awards Trophy and the winning certificate at the Monmouthshire Show 2015. 2014 Winner, Severdale Farm and Hanley Farm Shop, hosted Open Farm Sunday event assisted by AONB staff and LEMUR+ Placement 	DO	Aug 2015

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve winner in Open Farm Sunday event. 			
<p>Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collate project applications for 2015/2016 grants for the SDF Assessment Panel Service SDF Assessment Panel for allocating funds for 2014/2015 Review SDF application processes and Assessment Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £61,000 allocated leveraging in match funding totalling £187,788.84 with £144,753.84 cash and £43,035.00 in kind 10 projects supported including: Wye & Usk Foundation River Clean up, Savoy Youth Theatre Promenade Sensory Theatre, Wildlife Bioblitz Monmouth, Dixton Church Interpretation Boards, Wye Valley AONB Youth Rangers, Wye Valley River Festival – development and educational element, Deer Initiative project, Gwent Wildlife Trust Cattle grazing Project, Future Landscapes Wales. Review SDF Assessment Panel on-going Harewood End Agricultural Society launched their book celebrating 125 years of farming in Herefordshire (with SDF support in 2014/15). 	AONBO/ CLO	May 2015 Nov 2015 Jan 2016
<p>Picturesque Produce and distribute the Spring and Autumn edition of the AONB newsletter, 'Picturesque' incorporating interpretation programme 'Wye So Special' to provide information and interpretation to increase residents' and visitors' awareness and appreciation of the AONB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to staffing issues and illness only 1 edition of Picturesque (Winter 2015) produced and distributed. Emphasis for PR has focused on remaining AONB staff working with Twitter #wyebeauty and Facebook pages: Wye Valley AONB & Wye Valley River Festival. 	IO/CLO/ ALL	Sept 2015 March 2016
<p>JAC Seminar & meetings Organise Annual Seminar on key issue for AONB Partnership members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to staff shortages and illness no Seminar held 	AONBO	Feb 2016
<p>JAC Tour Organise JAC Annual Study Tour of key sites &/or issues for AONB Partnership members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 people attended the annual AONB Partnership Tour, with a good turn out of Town, Parish and Community Council representatives. The Study Tour visited Symonds Yat Rock; Lancaut Church and the work of the Forest of Dean Buildings Preservation Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust; Youth Hostel Association St Briavel's Castle, also lunch there. Tarmac operations at Stowfield Quarry; Braceland and the mindSCAPE project; Biblins Bridge and Forestry Commission activities, including their involvement in the Wye Valley River Festival 2016. 	DO/AONBO/ FAO	Sep 2015
<p>Exhibitions & Outreach Promote the AONB through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stands at the Wye Valley River Festival, Monmouthshire Show, Hereford Country Show and other relevant shows. Local exhibitions, celebrity book signings and other local appropriate / prestigious events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to staff shortages and illness only the Monmouthshire Show and Magna Carta event at the Speech House were attended 	ALL	Mar 2016
<p>MindSCAPE Year 2 of £165,000 Big Lottery funded 4 year initiative enabling people living with dementia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 2 has seen the project continue to grow from strength to strength, both in terms of community awareness, participation and referrals, but also in terms of developing practical skills working with people with dementia and their carers and understanding the impact that the project has on their lives. Particularly 	DO/IO	Mar 2016

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<p>to access the landscape and to reconnect with the landscape, through arts and creative environmental activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage project and submit reports & claims for Big Lottery • Supervise contractor to organise regular creative sessions, workshops and social activities at Bracelands woodland site, near Coleford in Gloucestershire, for participants who are living with dementia and their carers and families. <p>http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/index.php/mindscape/</p>	<p>those of carers, some of whom have experienced bereavement or the stress and upheaval of their loved ones moving into full time residential care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48th mindSCAPE session took place in March 2016. Since the start of the project we have worked with 33 people: 17 carers and 16 people with dementia. After 18 months (Jan 2016), 90% of respondents reported that the project made them feel less isolated • Examples of activities delivered this year include; working with leather, going on a 'poetry walk', working with an artist from the RSPB, printmaking using objects found in nature, using natural materials to felt-make, and trying mindful mediation and dance/movement. This year we have linked mindSCAPE to other community projects and initiatives including: The Sculpture Trust de-commissioning of 'Place - The Giants Chair', visiting the sculpture on site at Beechenhurst, the Arts Council Funded 'Story of Objects' and singing for dementia with 'Mindsong'. • 'mindSCAPE hub' monthly coffee morning/ information drop in sessions delivered in partnership with Crossroads care and other dementia providers. • External evaluation of the project undertaken by national organisation 'Dementia Adventure'. This two day process comprised of an audit of the mindSCAPE project and venue (Bracelands Adventure Centre) and interviews with staff, volunteers and participants. Feedback from participants with dementia and their carers was extremely positive and highlighted the success of the programme in terms of quality of workshops, staffing and volunteers • Presentation on mindSCAPE given to the National Assembly for Wales Cross Party Group on Rural Affairs and case study included in National Parks & AONBs 'So much more than the View' publication. 		
<p>Wye Valley River Festival 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit bids to Arts Councils and other sources for Festival development. • Organise main communities to start developing event ideas within their areas. • Establishing website to promote up and coming events. • Develop business sponsorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research & Development (R&D) Phase successfully concluded engaging 150 people through four creative exploratory workshops that brought together artists, conservation experts and community producers. The R&D phase was supported by the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales and Shire Hall Monmouth. • Plans progressed well for the Wye Valley River Festival 2016, with the dates set for 29th April - 15th May 2016. Festival Choir commenced rehearsals. Over 500 children at 11 schools received conservation visits and Festival Banner making workshops. • Working budget of £200,000 secured with funding from the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, supported by the Welsh Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery, Environment Agency, Ernest Cook Trust, Forestry Commission England, New Grove Trust,, Ross Town Council and in-kind support from Hereford River Carnival, The Shire Hall, Monmouth, Mon Teas, National Museum of Wales, Chepstow Racecourse, numerous volunteers and local communities • A business sponsorship package was launched; main business sponsor Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire and media sponsors Sunshine Radio and Live 24-Seven. • Majority of consents and licences secured. Special thanks to land owners at Hereford Council, Ross Town Council, The Tump Lydbrook, the Slaughters Biblins, Vauxhall Fields Monmouth, Redbrook Bridge, Llandogo Riverside, Old Station Tintern and Chepstow Racecourse who granted access for River Festival events. 	CLO/DO/ ALL	May 2015

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<p>Youth Rangers Years 4 of £80,000 Your Heritage funded 6 year initiative which aims to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness and understanding of the Wye Valley AONB's heritage among young people and their communities. Deliver a structured programme of activity for young people that will increase their skill set in heritage conservation. Inspire young people to develop their skills beyond the life of the scheme. Develop a model of excellence when engaging young people in heritage Engage young people directly through their labour to manage heritage sites. <p>http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/index.php/youth-rangers/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second cohort of Wye Valley AONB Youth Rangers completed their 2 years with a 'graduation event' at Bracelands and a Summer Camp at 'Humble by Nature' The third cohort of Wye Valley AONB Youth Rangers recruited. A taster event was hosted in September and further taster and familiarisation events carried out over Half Term week in October. Further promotional events in local Secondary Schools also took place. Monthly events held; January - First aid outdoors & land management, February - charcoal project, coppicing & filming, March - All about deer, monitoring & tracking Negotiations with Forestry Commission and a Youth Ranger programme included in the successful Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership Stage 1 bid to Heritage Lottery Fund. 	DO/CLO	Mar 2016
<p>Deer Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene & service Deer Management Groups and Deer Monitoring and Impacts Project Coordinate deer surveys in the Woolhope Dome and Lower Wye Valley Assist co-ordination of collaborative deer cull through the Deer Management Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deer Initiative concluded Deer Monitoring & Impact Project, of which the AONB Officer chaired the Steering Group. Lower Wye Valley Deer Management Group meetings held, chaired by AONB Officer. Discussions with Forestry Commission, Natural England and Deer Initiative about reinvigorating the Woolhope Dome Deer Management Group. Deer population survey co-ordinated for Woolhope Dome and Lower Wye Valley. 	AONBO	Mar 2016 June 2015 Nov 2015
<p>Habitat Conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Phase 1 and priority BAP habitat surveys Ongoing audit of the ancient tree survey Development of projects with the help of LEMUR+ students. Organise monthly volunteer task days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Links Officer held 8 volunteer sessions, including work tasks at Highbury Woods National Nature Reserve, Joan's Hill Farm, Staunton Meend Common, Ty Mawr, Broome Farm and River Litter picks with Wye & Usk Foundation. Phase 1 Habitat mapping continued. CLO and LEMUR+ Trainees attended Bioblitz event in Monmouth in June 2015 and various Monmouthshire Botany Group events. Discussions held with Ross Town Council over management of Ross Riverside (part of asset transfer from Herefordshire Council) 	DO/CLO	Mar 2016
<p>Website and social networking Upgrading and management of www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk and social</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website re-design contract tendered and let. Unfortunately company subsequently went into administration. Rescue company took over assets and have continued with contract. Due to AONB staff shortages and ill health contract completion has been delayed. 	ALL	Mar 2016

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networking sites e.g. facebook and twitter. Maintenance of www.wyevalleywalk.org and hosting of www.overlookingthewye.org.uk & www.wyevalleyriverfestival.org.uk websites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB staff working with Twitter #wyebeauty and Facebook pages: Wye Valley AONB & Wye Valley River Festival. Film produced with NRW highlighting NRW's work in the Wye Valley AONB. 		
Work placements Support the needs of student placements/group projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEMUR+ trainees on 9 month & 3 month placements. Host PhD research post on 'Corporeal Connections in the Contemporary Landscape' and provide technical assistance with PhD dissertation and evaluation of data regarding the cultural significance of the AONB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two trainee placements hosted on the LEMUR+ (Learning Environments in Marine, Urban & Rural areas) programme, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund 'Skills for Life'. Sophie Marley (nee. Anderson) on a 9 month placement and Stephen Shutt on a 3 month placement. They supported AONB staff with a variety of activities and were trained in and carried out Phase 1 Habitat Surveys in the Woolhope Dome area, working alongside the LEMUR+ trainees with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, who co-ordinate the placements. Sophie given a 12 week contract to continue her placement with the Unit until February 2016. Shortlisting and Interviews undertaken for both the 9 month and 4 month LEMUR+ placements for 2016. The 9 month placement commences in April and the 4 month placement starts in May 2016. Greg Dunn continued his PhD research, including leading a Guided Walk and using AONB Volunteers as part of research. Regular meetings held with his Professor and tutor from Birmingham City University. 	DO	Mar 2016
Undergrounding Continue working with Western Power to promote schemes within the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Development Officer attended 3 meetings with Western Power Distribution. Review of scheme in the Wye Valley AONB undertaken: since 2006, 35 schemes put forward, of which 9 have been successfully completed with an estimated value of just over £600,000. A total length of 7.6km of cable has been moved underground. 	DO	Mar 2016
Landscape scale conservation Develop and support partnership projects that deliver landscape scale conservation activity and initiatives within and adjoining the AONB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wye Catchment Management Partnership events and meetings attended by AONB Officer & AONB Development Officer. River Trothy Living Landscapes project developed with Gwent Wildlife Trust Wye Valley Woodlands project developed with Gwent Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust Discussion held with Forestry Commission, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency & Wye & Usk Foundation on potential Wye Valley project 	DO	Mar 2016
Wye Valley Walk Support Wye Valley Walk Partnership Monitor counters along Walk Manage Passport scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to staff shortages and illness no Wye Valley Walk Partnership hosted Analysis of people counter on Redbrook Bridge identified peak usage of 1,367 on 06/09/2015. Average usage per day was 246. Passports continued to be issued, despite staff shortages and illness. Elsie and Margaret Stockwell, both in their 80s, received certificates for completing the Wye Valley Walk over 4 years, walking the 136 mile route in carefully planned week-long sections, staying in self-catering cottages and using 2 cars so that each day they had a car at the finishing point. They said "The walk is so beautiful and we had as much fun planning it as in walking it. It was a life affirming adventure". 	FAO	Mar 2015
Public Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote guided walks, events, children's activities and countryside craft /rural skills courses Give talks/presentations to local groups Regular press releases and magazine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Guided walks supported or led including for Herefordshire Walking Festival, Ross Walking Festival and Chepstow Walking Festival. Talks given to St Weonards Retirement Group, Ross/Hereford Ramblers AGM, Gwent Wildlife Trust - Usk Branch Media profile built up, particularly focusing on Wye Valley River Festival and Youth Rangers 	ALL	Mar 2016

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articles / advertorial			
Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host AONB Tourism Co-ordination Group and liaise with Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Destination Partnership. Comment on national AONB policy documents when required Attend National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and Europarc seminars Attend meetings or receive minutes of Local Nature Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AONB Officer participated in Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Destination Management Partnership and drafting of Destination Management Plan Diane McCrea, newly appointed chair of Natural Resources Wales (NRW), visited the AONB in March 2016 along with NRW Principal Landscape Adviser and NAAONB Chairman and NAAONB Chief Executive Officer, Howard Davies, who is also a NRW Board Member. AONB Officer represented the AONB at AONB and National Park Chairmen one day Conference in London. Five representatives from the AONB Partnership attended the national AONB Landscapes for Life Conference, with theme of 'Sharing, Learning, Inspiring' in Winchester. Ashley Thomas was presented with a 'Landscapes for Life Award' at the conference. 	AONBO/ DO	Mar 2016
Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with AONB Family on taking Future Landscapes Programme forward With the three National Parks and 4 other AONB's in Wales, including publish promotional calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Welsh Protected Landscapes, the 5 AONBs (Anglesey, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, Gower, Llŷn and Wye Valley) and 3 National Parks (Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia) collaborated on a joint project to promote the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of Wales' protected landscapes, as part of Visit Wales' Year of Adventure. Short videos were produced of each landscape. The Wye Valley video received 22,450 views, 311 'shares' and 138 'likes' on Facebook. AONB Officer contributed to Future Landscapes Wales programme, attending collaborations workshops and development seminars and participating in 'Innovation in resourcing' Project Group. 	ALL	Aug 2015
Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing updating of the AONB GIS Monitor and review implementation of the AONB Management Plan 2015/2020 Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 Habitat Survey ongoing, focusing predominantly in the Woolhope Dome area Data collation for AONB Management Plan ongoing 	DO	Mar 2016
Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service and set agendas for JAC, TOWP and Steering Group Prepare grant bids and claims for Natural Resources Wales and Defra, and other funding bodies as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three JAC meetings held plus 3 TOWP meetings & 2 Steering Group meetings. All bids and claims submitted on time. Staffing issues due to ill health resolved with agency cover for AONB Finance & Admin Officer and AONB Information returning to work on reduced hours. 	AONBO/ FAO	Jun, Oct, Feb Jan, May 2016
Funding and resources Continue investigating funding and development opportunities. Investigation into external funding and securing sources for strategic and partnership projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going, including discussions with Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership scheme, Arts Council, Herefordshire Community Foundation, Community Foundation for Wales etc. 	DO	Mar 2016
Walking with Offa / Irresistible Offa <i>Investigate opportunities for future cross</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irresistible Offa Partnership continued to meet and Business Plan produced for potential Phase 2 Investigation of new bids to either LEADER Co-operation, INTERREG Atlantic Area &/or HLF. 	AONBO	Mar 2016

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<i>border partnership projects along the corridor of Offa's Dyke, promoting walking and sustainable tourism.</i>			
<p>Overlooking the Wye legacy <i>Continue to develop heritage & Community projects as part of the legacy of the Overlooking the Wye Landscape Partnership Scheme</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All interpretation installed under Overlooking the Wye was checked and cleaned • Contract of minor repairs and maintenance let for Overlooking the Wye interpretation infrastructure • Discussions with various organisations, including Forest of Dean Buildings Preservation Trust, about further development of legacy projects • Discussions with various partners over a potential archaeological project focused on Offa's Dyke. 	AONBO	Mar 2016