

CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT - YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND FEASIBILITY FOR ONGOING LEADERSHIP ACTIVITY WITH THE PARTNERSHIP

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Summary

This paper sets out a process of youth engagement for the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the proposal.

Background

As part of our Resilient Heritage project, we are exploring opportunities to embed youth involvement more widely in our work, hopefully in a lasting ongoing way. We have done some successful activity over recent years funding and delivering the John Muir Award and Young Rangers programmes. However we lack any real youth involvement in the AONB Partnership structure and much of our other work.

There are a number of current drivers and reasons why we now wish to address this:

- Lack of youth involvement was flagged up in an Equalities Assessment of the review of the Partnership's Terms of Reference earlier this year.
- Last September the Europarc Federation's Youth Manifesto was launched. This is about involving young people in conservation, and also addressing some of the challenges which young people in rural areas face, which affect the future of those areas. The themes are – Youth Empowerment, Living, Working, Learning, and a Call to Action. We belong to the Europarc Federation, which is the umbrella for the Young Rangers scheme.
- We are seeking to respond actively to the climate and environment emergency (including loss of nature and functioning ecosystems) since these are longstanding top priority issues for us and we know concern about this is high among young people.
- We are developing a Youth project which will hopefully provide new opportunities for involvement of young people. Some 'leadership' opportunities linked to our structure and mainstream work would complement other practical activities through the project.

We are letting a small contract to South Shropshire Youth Forum to explore through a consultation process with young people what form of youth involvement or representation we can create. One idea is some form of youth council or group linked to the AONB Partnership in which young people can come together with each other and progress their own ideas connected with our remit. We could at stages then bring this together with the

Partnership, our staff team and other groups. A potential pool of young people to engage with this may be past participants from the John Muir Award and/or Young Rangers programmes in the Shropshire Hills – many of these have heard of the AONB and will have positive experiences associated with it.

How any activity can be sustained in the future will be a key consideration for what we choose to do, so we are also seeking advice also on feasibility and resource implications for future support, etc. The consultation will mainly consist of an event involving some AONB Partnership members in a process described as ‘political speed dating’, where young people and Partnership members would rotate around having discussions on particular topics. Expressions of interest from Partnership members to be involved in this would be welcomed.

“In a society increasingly driven by technology and geared towards rapid progress, Protected Areas offer a particularly valuable balance for young people (and the rest of us) to slow down, discover, think and become actively involved in nature. In return, our Protected Areas can benefit greatly from their creative energy, unconventional thinking and understanding of the younger generation’s needs.

EUROPARC recently launched the Youth Manifesto: A call for change in our Protected Areas and rural communities from youth representatives of Europe. They make it clear; they want to be part of our collective parks and our collective future. They made a demand not just asking that something be done FOR youth in rural and Protected Areas but that something be done WITH them. Beyond consultation, to co-design a sustainable future. The imperative is now on parks and administrations, communities, decision and policy makers to rise to that challenge.”

Carol Ritchie, Director, Europarc Federation

List of Background Papers Europarc Federation’s Youth Manifesto http://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/EUROPARC20Youth20Manifesto_web20version.pdf .
Human Rights Act Appraisal The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
Environmental Appraisal The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
Risk Management Appraisal Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
Community / Consultations Appraisal The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices None