



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 24 th November 2020	<u>Item</u> 6
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR AONBS AND EUROPARC FEDERATION UPDATE

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254741

Summary

This paper provides information on relevant recent activity of the National Association for AONBs and the Europarc Federation.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided, opportunities for involvement, and to adopt the NAAONB 'Art in the Landscape' Strategy.

Background - National Association for AONBs

Some particular recent activities of NAAONB include:

Glover review - providing data, evidence, and insight to inform discussion on forthcoming Government response to the Review. Advocating for the best outcome for AONBs and ensuring that decisions are made based on a sound understanding of how the AONB Family and the NAAONB operates.

Working differently and supporting collaboration between AONB teams. Conclusion of the Taking the Lead programme, and the development of a new collaborative programme of work, funded by AONB teams in England and co-ordinated by the NAAONB.

Nature recovery - with support of Natural England, NAAONB now employs a Nature Recovery Coordinator. This post will help provide the resource required centrally to support the delivery of the Colchester Declaration and engage productively with the National Park Authorities.

Advocating - for strengthening the duty of regard to the AONB purpose(s). Also supported an amendment to include reference to landscape in the Agriculture Bill. The purpose of this was to position the AONB and National Park management plans central to post-Brexit agricultural support mechanism and facilitate the targeting of support payments to help conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Environmental Land Management - Collective response through 'Farming for the Nation' - programme of Tests and Trials designed to inform ELMS. Also recently awarded a contract to

deliver an advocacy and training programme for designated landscape staff, working with AONB and National Park teams across England.

New audiences - currently supporting a national conversation to explore how we become more inclusive in the ways we operate.

Art in the Landscape - Following a successful bid to Arts Council England, supplemented with additional funding from individual AONBs, the NAAONB engaged the consultants Activate to prepare a National Arts Strategy in order to connect people to nature through arts and culture. A national training programme for AONB staff is under way (Joy Howells from our team is undertaking this training).

Individual AONB Partnerships are encouraged to adopt the NAAONB National Arts Strategy, and today's agenda item recommends that we do this. There are good links here with Shropshire's new Cultural Strategy <https://shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/vibrant-shropshire-cultural-strategy-2021-2031/>.

Collaborative work is also being undertaken with The Poetry School, co-ordinating across the AONB Family to support The Laurel and Ginkgo prizes for nature and environmental poetry.

Events – The National Conference, Lead Officer meetings, workshops, and the Chairmen's Conference have all necessarily been cancelled in 2020. While this has affected work and had financial consequences, it has provided an opportunity to reconsider events in the future, best use of online platforms, reducing carbon footprint and widening the potential audiences. NAAONB will soon be rolling out a carefully designed online platform for running interactive events online which will also be available to AONB Partnerships for use at the local level.

Leadership – NAAONB seeks to prepare the network to take an adaptive response, make sense of complexity and view uncertainty as opportunity rather than threat. A distributive leadership approach is favoured, which:

- enables rather than restricts
- is based on known uncertainty rather than a fallacious notion of certainty
- seeks to constantly make sense, rather than impose rigidity of vision
- creates space and confidence for leadership to emerge at any and all levels
- supports dynamic fluidity of leadership across the AONB Family and stakeholders
- differentiates leadership from collaboration and builds consent, not consensus
- mediates conflict and directs new common ground into active systems change.

Mechanisms for communication, sharing ideas, and sense-making must be opened wider to embrace the thoughts and feelings of stakeholders. This requirement should be built into our current work in engaging new audiences and promoting landscapes for everyone.

Devolution and the complexity associated with working within and across different national political and legislative frameworks is a challenge. A new grant to NAAONB is supporting the employment of a Wales Development Officer.

Background - Europarc Federation

The Europarc Federation has recently run webinars including:

- Healthy Parks Healthy People programme
- Climate change adaptation in Protected Areas – from theory to practice.
- Sustainable Tourism Management in the Post-Pandemic Reality
- Online Conference – Our New Future, How Ready Are We?

The Europarc Atlantic Isles section (UK & Ireland) has also organised webinars by Prof John Lawton on 'Making Space for Nature 10 years on', and on implementation of the Glover Review.

In the Europarc conference workshop on Sustainable Tourism the experience of the post coronavirus lockdown rush to parks and green spaces was discussed and it was recognised that Protected Areas provide an added value, important for health and wellbeing. Some suggestions of what protected areas need for the future based on this learning include:

- Creative and innovative thinking. We might encounter new crises and we need to think differently to deal with them.
- Social abilities: to meet and understand people and to avoid and solve potential conflict situations.
- Visitor knowledge and monitoring: need to know the visitors better, understand their behaviour, their needs and how to reach them – especially new audiences
- Services design thinking: in order to offer more sustainable services. It is important to know the "visitor's path": before, during and after the visit to the protected area, in order to guarantee sustainability.
- Visitor management plans: how to manage large numbers of people? (parking lots crowded, excess of people in sensitive areas, etc.) Need to apply new approaches.
- Effective communication. How to influence the behaviour of visitors effectively? How to deal with new audiences? How to make the most of this opportunity for encouraging new visitors? Use of IT for real time info /communication contents.
- Partnership working. With stakeholders, tourism enterprises, etc.

AONBs are in a category of areas known in Europarc as Nature Regional Landscape Parks. In other countries as in the UK, these areas tend to be secondary to National Parks and under-resourced, limiting their potential to deliver optimal benefits to society. Europarc has recently launched a position paper aiming to raise the profile of these areas, highlighting the key services they provide for nature, environment, society and a good quality of life, especially biological diversity, climate change, sustainable agriculture and food supply, sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas, sustainable tourism and recreation, environmental education, health and wellbeing, innovation for sustainable development.

These areas exemplify a dynamic-innovation approach, known as an 'integration approach', in which cooperation among various stakeholders is a key element, and the protected area is perceived as part of a living socio-ecological landscape rather than being isolated space. Their focus is the interests of both nature and humans.

This reinforces the UK directions through the Glover Review to strengthen AONBs.

List of Background Papers

NAAONB AGM papers 19 November 2020

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/6216/0500/1777/NAAONB_AGM_Papers_No_v_20.pdf

NAAONB National Art in the Landscape Strategy

https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/application/files/2116/0318/0964/Art_in_the_Landscape_-_Final_Report.pdf

Europarc Position Paper - Nature Regional Landscape Parks - Where Policy meets Practice

https://www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Policy-Paper_NRLPs_Final.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

Appendix 1 Extracts from NAAONB Art in the Landscape strategy

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ART IN THE LANDSCAPE - connecting people to nature through arts and culture

VISION

People experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts.

STRATEGY AIMS

1. To connect people to nature and the natural beauty of the AONBs – increasing creativity, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour.
2. To challenge perceptions of access to the landscape in order to diversify engagement.
3. To broker new trusted relationships with the arts and cultural sector to cocreate new programmes.
4. To celebrate the existing creativity in the AONB teams and the local community.
5. To work with arts and culture to understand and directly address the climate emergency and nature recovery.
6. To welcome provocations and questions in exploring ways that arts can change perceptions.
7. To inspire ambition by sharing exemplary projects of all scales.
8. To capture the public's imagination through engaging them in creative responses to the landscape.
9. To raise the profile of the landscape and the AONBs and the purpose of the AONB teams.
10. To lever in resources and relationships at all levels for an ambitious programme.

Extract on Connectedness to Nature

Nature Connectedness is a measurable psychological construct that moves beyond contact with nature to an individual's sense of their relationship with the natural world, championed by Miles Richardson, University of Derby. (<https://www.derby.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/nature-connectedness-research-group/>).

"Rather than a focus on learning, there should be a focus on creating art, poetry and music – through noticing nature, its beauty and telling the story of the meaning and feelings it brings. Rather than a focus on learning the history, help nurture and enhance the present – caring for nature is a pathway to connection. Create a new culture of celebrating our place in nature."

Miles Richardson Blog.

A new Nature Connection Index (NCI) has demonstrated that if people assess themselves as 76% or greater connected to nature, they are far more likely to be active in their concern for landscape and resultant increase in well-being. Nature connection can be developed by focusing on five types of activity:

- tuning our senses,
- responding with our emotions,
- appreciating beauty,
- celebrating meaning, and
- activating our compassion for nature.