

## **MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **23 APRIL 2021**

## **NATIONAL ARTS STRATEGY**

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### **Recommendation**

- 1. The Committee is recommended to:**
  - a) Adopt the Arts in the Landscape Strategy and support participation in coordinated national and local action resulting from the Strategy,**
  - b) Support the principle of using arts to help join up climate change mitigation and adaptation and nature recovery work; and**
  - c) Contact David Armitage if members have artistic ideas, or indeed experience of running successful ‘arts’ projects.**

### **Background**

2. What follows is a model agreement on a National Arts Strategy, laid out by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB). All AONBs will be asked to consider agreeing to it.
3. With support from the AONB network, the NAAONB has commissioned and adopted the ‘Arts in the Landscape Strategy: connecting people to nature through art and culture’. Each AONB is invited to adopt the Strategy as an indication of the joint commitment to deepen and diversify how we engage people in our protected areas through the arts. While the potential for this activity is extensive, particular note should be made of the opportunity to connect people to nature through art, such as enhancing the delivery and impact of Nature Recovery activity. This joint commitment will be powerful and effective at local, regional and national level, taking us further than we could get individually.

### **Summary**

1. A national strategy has been created by the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) to galvanise action that enables people to experience a deeper connection to the natural beauty of the landscape through the arts.
2. The Art in The Landscape Strategy was formally adopted at the NAAONB Annual General Meeting in November 2020 and all AONBs are invited to adopt the Strategy and participate in coordinated national and local action resulting from it. The Strategy helps the AONB Network achieve its Colchester Declaration aims<sup>1</sup>, and those of the National Landscapes Review around:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/projects/colchester-declaration>

- Engaging with a wider and more diverse audience
- Helping people to create deeper connections to nature, place and landscape
- Inspiring pro-environmental behaviour to tackle the conjoined ecological and climate emergency

3. The Art in the Landscape Strategy helps focus future delivery of art activity, collectively within the AONB family as well as locally. It also shows Arts Council England and other funders that the NAAONB and the AONB Network are committing to broaden and deepen our work with arts and culture in order to better connect people to nature.

### **Relevance to the Malvern Hills AONB**

4. Page 85 of our current Management Plan hopes that people ‘are connected intellectually, emotionally and/or spiritually with the area’, and that ‘the AONBs heritage inspires passion, intrigue and fascination’. The ‘arts’ can turn hope to action.

5. We have done a few arts projects in the past: poetry writing days in the AONB with the Ledbury Poetry Festival and a play about Malvern’s Heritage on the Route to the Hills Project. But like most marketing, it needs a consistent effort to produce results: this hasn’t happened: this Strategy would help.

### **Art in the Landscape Strategy Development**

6. The ‘National Moment’ in 2019, supported by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage with [‘Fugitives’](#), presented the NAAONB with a high-profile stage to make an ambitious [‘Art in the Landscape Statement of Intent’](#) - a commitment to engaging people with nature through the arts.

7. In this statement, Howard Davies (Chief Exec, NAAONB) states, “The creative exploration of place, through music, painting, poetry, and dance opens up the experience of landscape beyond the world of science and policy and helps us better understand our place in the world. With better understanding comes better stewardship; the basis of a more sustainable future.”

8. On the back of the statement of intent, NAAONB resourced the development of the strategy with grant support from Arts Council England (ACE) and contributions from the AONB network. A national steering group was set up and Activate Performing Arts were commissioned to:

- Consult with AONB teams with different levels of experience in delivering arts and culture projects, importantly hearing from those who have not yet delivered major projects.
- Research good practice from the three land guardians: National Trust, Forestry England and Canal & Rivers Trust who have Memorandums of Understanding with Arts Council England.
- Consult with senior officers from Arts Council England and other agencies.
- Deliver a training programme for the AONB members to offer insight into working with the arts and develop confidence in the teams.

- Produce the Arts in the Landscape Strategy to provide direction for the NAAONB and AONB Network

9. A summary of the Aims and Recommendations of the Strategy are detailed below, the full Strategy can be found [on the NAAONB website](#).

### **Art in the Landscape Strategy: Vision and Aims**

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

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 co- create 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.

### **Art in the Landscape Strategy: Summary of Recommendations**

#### **1. Adopt the National Arts Strategy**

*The process of developing the Strategy was grounded in the consultation across the network. A nationally and locally endorsed strategy will have strong currency in discussions with external agencies, both national agencies such as government and funders and locally with partners, arts and cultural organisations.*

#### Recommendations:

- NAAONB adopt and endorse the Strategy and report at the Annual Chairs meeting;
- following on from this each AONB circulates the Strategy to all AONB's staff and members of AONB partnership boards;
- time is dedicated at full team meetings of each AONB and at partnership board for presentation and discussion of the Strategy;

- the Strategy is adopted by each AONB partnership board who agree an in principal commitment to invest in the proposed National resource;
- a five-year national action plan should then be drawn up (relating to Recommendation 8), endorsed by the National Steering Group and adopted by the NAAONB;
- recognising the unique sense of place each AONB has, each creates a local action plan of how the strategy can be implemented in their area within their Management plan and relating to the national plan.

## **2. Deliver a National Creative Projects Programme**

*Research responses also strongly advocated for national creative projects to be clustered around specific themes, e.g., dark skies, coasts, ceremonial landscapes and hill forts. Crucially the national creative projects need a simple artistic provocation at the centre. Further ideas will be created by inviting experienced artists from diverse backgrounds into the AONBs and allowing their thinking to imagine new possibilities*

### Recommendation:

- That national creative projects, of different forms, are adopted as a powerful activity in line with the aims for the AONBs. They can offer the opportunity:
  - for all AONBs to be involved;
  - to be planned to share good practice and encourage peer to peer support;
  - to be scalable so can be variation of delivery dependent upon local partners and resource – it is important to note that small budgets can be used resourcefully with artists;
  - to create stories, images, film that can be used for gaining profile and inspiration for future projects;
  - to hold over a specified period, such as Spring, or at the same time across the country events such as building on the existing national Landscapes for Life week in late September each year;
  - for collaboration with other national organisations, for example Culture Declares Emergency.

## **3. Widen the welcome**

*The NAAONB and many individual AONBs want to take positive action to set about broadening the reach of the work, which will result in far more people feeling connected to nature and wanting to be proactive in their tendency to nature conservation. Arts and culture are an excellent way to do this.*

### Recommendations:

- The AONBs work through arts and culture programmes to establish meaningful links, connections and visits with communities with higher levels of people from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.
- A target for new arts and culture projects that at least 50% of the commissioned lead artists are from D/deaf and disabled, BAMER and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Equally, this should also be reflected in the teams brought in to work on the project and those participating in the work.

- The Steering Group and National lead will support the identifying of a cohort of interested artists that AONBs could then work with on creative projects.

#### **4. Develop the Governance**

*There is a relatively low level of membership by representatives from cultural organisations on AONB Management or Stakeholder groups and in partnership working.*

##### Recommendations:

- that the positive recruitment of at least one person from the culture sector to become a member of these Governance groups with a specific brief to help both the committee and staff team to develop their engagement with the arts and to adopt the Strategy.
- that relationships with artists, arts and cultural organisations that either are located in or near the AONBs are developed.

#### **5. Advocate continually**

*Arts and culture should be integrated in delivering conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the same way that 'outreach' or 'education' currently are.*

##### Recommendations:

- the NAAONB, the Steering Group and individual AONBs continue to advocate for the work through an existing and ongoing programme of conferences, regular information briefings and presentations and through the dissemination of case studies, evaluation and research findings and any generated external coverage into the enhanced arts programme.
- a dedicated area of the NAAONB's website to be created to showcase the arts programme and house the links to individual projects across the country.

#### **6. Sustain and expand the National Arts and Culture Steering Group**

*This current research programme has been guided by a steering group, comprised of representatives from the NAAONB and individual AONBs, bringing a range of viewpoints, regional perspectives and represents differing levels of existing engagement across the membership.*

##### Recommendation:

The Steering Group is extended to become an ongoing steering group and that its membership is widened either by co-option or invitation to include places for representatives from artists, arts and culture organisations and that diversity is considered and reimbursement for time is offered.

#### **7. Develop an understanding between NAAONB, AONBs and Arts Council England**

*This funded research process has seen a continuing and developing dialogue at strategic level between NAAONB, AONBs and ACE.*

### Recommendations:

- the NAAONB continue these discussions with ACE and develop an agreement based around their shared priorities. This agreement should look to the coming five years, as a trial period for joint working to increase arts and culture engagement within AONBs, with artists and organisations for people based both within and without them. The agreement should be monitored annually by senior ACE officers and the NAAONB and the Steering Group.
- that as ACE refreshes its Rural Stakeholders group, it invites a representative from the Steering group to the bi-annual meeting considering issues relating to arts and culture and rural communities and sends officer/s to the NAAONB annual conference to understand the developing AONB context.

## **8. Create a Core National Resource**

*Research and consultation identified the benefit and catalysing impact of a core national resource would have - encouraging, inspiring, supporting and advocating for arts and culture within the sector and beyond.*

### Recommendation

Create a new national role (with some administrative support) based within the NAAONB to bring expertise and additional capacity to deliver the strategy's aim and vision. This should be resourced for a medium-term period of five years, with a delivery budget.

## **9. Create a Training and Professional Development Programme**

*AONBs and their staff have an identified need for specific training and capacity building and continuing professional development programmes in working with the arts.*

### Recommendations:

- Training & capacity building is developed in a number of ways and managed by the national Arts and Culture Development Manager:
  - Inspirational – making detailed case studies of projects available, commissioning online video interviews with AONB officers and artists on their work together and live presentations at future national conferences.
  - Practical – building on from the training delivered in this programme developing access to a set of bespoke resources e.g. project toolkit including planning guidance, suggested processes, timelines, budgeting advice, budget template, marketing and audience development; evaluation frameworks.
  - Mutual Learning and Support – cluster support and networking groups could emerge either from AONBs Taking The Lead programme, the Communications Group or areas of interest such as Dark Skies. These groups would develop a term of reference for a specific period to offer mutual support, explore themes together, develop potential group collaboration and share artist information.

NB: the full Strategy can be found [on the NAAONB website](#).

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