

# Annual Review

2016-2017





# Chairman's Foreword

**Welcome to this Annual Review of the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which celebrates the highlights of the year and illustrates the way in which we work, tackling key issues whilst we strengthen connections for the local economy, communities and wildlife.**

The small team has undergone a major change during the year with Robin Toogood's retirement after 22 years' service as part of the Coast and Countryside team.

Over the years Robin had become the 'face' that Devon's AONBs, the South West Protected Landscapes Forum and wider AONB community, recognised and respected for his understanding and thoroughly professional approach to challenging issues affecting AONBs. These ranged from the impact of Foot and Mouth on the economy and access to the coast, through to major coastal erosion impacts causing the coastal road closure within Slapton NNR. He was able to implement successful recovery programmes providing the vital link between local people and national organisations, as partners in the process and taking opportunities to reconnect communities with our coast, countryside, estuaries and marine natural beauty.

Robin held a farewell cream tea in the stunning location of Sharpham House on the Dart and about 70 friends and colleagues joined him to wish him well for the future. I would like to personally thank Robin for his enduring hard work and influence in this very special landscape.

AONB Project Officer Roger English was appointed to the role of AONB Unit Manager and took up the role in September. As we embark on the next chapter we face a time of change, both nationally as Brexit is implemented and locally as our new manager takes up the reins. But I am confident that in South Devon we have demonstrated how we can benefit from the opportunities that change brings, and that our strong partnership working will ensure the future of this very special place.

Excellent progress has been made on the development of our Planning Guidance, together with the delivery of projects, working with a range of partners.

The AONB Partnership relies on the input from a much wider group and includes our funding partners Defra and four local authorities in addition to our community representatives. We are hugely grateful for their continued support.

**Andrew Pratt**  
Chairman, South Devon AONB Partnership Committee

# Highlights in 2016-2017



Open Farm Sunday at Goveton

**8**  
consultation  
workshops

staged for our Planning  
Guidance document.



**£8K grant**

secured from  
*Catchment Partnership  
Action Fund* to make  
an animated film  
about the water cycle.

**Almost £265K**  
grant funding

was awarded to projects  
by the South Devon  
Coastal Local Action  
Group, Leader  
Programme.



**South Devon Coastal**  
LOCAL ACTION GROUP



**£1.5K grant**

from section 106 for pond  
improvement and wildlife  
enhancement at Beeson  
Orchard.



**22**  
community  
orchards

engaged with the Growing  
Orchard Communities  
project delivered in  
partnership with  
Orchard Link.

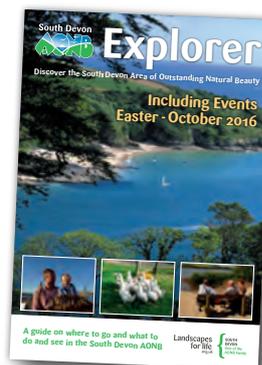


**431**  
volunteer days

for Orchard project  
equivalent to £64,450  
as specified by HLF.

**19,000**  
copies

of The Explorer  
guide were  
distributed  
across the AONB  
and beyond.



**25**  
events

staged for our 85 strong  
farmers group delivering  
landscape scale  
benefits to the  
Avon valley.

**over 100 people**  
at Open Farm Sunday



**60**

attended our Annual  
Forum with the  
theme of Health and  
Wellbeing in the great  
outdoors.



**1082**

partners, supporters  
and friends received  
our quarterly news and  
events ebulletins.

**1027**

attended AONB  
led events.

**people**

**489**

attended meetings  
where we were invited  
to talk about the AONB.

**437 visits**

to our 12 South Devon Landscape geocaches hidden around the AONB.  
All on one of our free downloadable walks.



**97,355**  
unique visits to  
our website.



An increase of  
20% from the  
previous year.



**158,528**  
tweet  
impressions

from twitter.



'Outstanding Week' walk around Start Point with BBC Radio Devon presenters



Apple day juicing at Dartmouth Community Orchard

## 'Outstanding Week' 17-25 September

This was the 2nd year of 'Outstanding Week'. 'Outstanding Week' is a fantastic way of highlighting the importance of AONBs across the Country and encouraging more people to get out and explore. It was also an opportunity to invite partners and funders to show their support on social media and to broadcast some key messages about our special landscapes. We hosted a walk from South Hallsands with BBC Radio Devon, a breakfast walk from Alf Rescos in Dartmouth and a Beach Clean at Salcombe.

## Orchards in our landscape

Orchards are a distinctive feature of the South Devon landscape. Almost every farm had an orchard to provide cider, juice, cooking and eating apples for the family, workers and the wider community. 60% of England's orchards have disappeared since the 1950s. In Devon, the figure is higher still at 90%.

The Growing Orchard Communities project links community orchard groups to the wider Orchard Link network. It aims to support local people to manage healthy orchards for the whole community to enjoy.

It is being delivered by the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, in partnership with Orchard Link. In total £86,800 of funding has been secured, including a grant of £40,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

23 community orchard groups from across South Devon are part of this exciting project. The project was launched at Sharpham House and community orchard in November 2015. It will run until the end of October 2017.

The project is made up of 2 main strands of work – community engagement and landscape enhancements.

### The Orchard Communities

The orchard groups we worked with all wanted to involve more people from their local communities in looking after and enjoying their

orchards, as well as ensuring that their members had the skills needed to ensure that their orchard sites were healthy and well managed.

- We are running a programme of workshops, training, networking and skill sharing events throughout the project.
- We have set up a network of community orchard volunteers who can now support each other in growing their own community orchards.
- We are working with 5 core groups who will receive some extra funding to run events to encourage people from their community to get involved in their orchards.

### A digital resource

What we have all learned during this project will be a great resource that can be used by community orchard groups anywhere. To make sharing this easy, we have built a new website for Orchard Link which is full of advice, information and an online toolkit of resources, free to download for community orchard volunteers anywhere.

### The Community Orchards

The continued good management of these community orchards is vital to the success of this project. As well as equipping the volunteers with the skills they need to look after the sites, we are helping them to write simple 5-year management plans and provide site specific expert advice and mentoring. They are also able to draw down a small site improvement grant to carry out some of the works identified in their plan.

These plans and advice will ensure management continuity of the orchard sites and has helped some of the groups attract further funding.



Sparkwell apple day





Nutrient planning and efficiency workshop

Lambing Sunday at Collaton Down Farm

## Facilitation Programme

We have been working with a group of 85 farmers in the Avon Valley as part of our Natural England funded Facilitation project. This is a five year scheme which started in July 2015.

Year 2 activities:

- Hedge Management and Woodfuel
- Parasites - sheep & cattle
- Pollinators
- Nutrient Planning and Efficiency
- IT Training
- Small woodland management
- Cattle tracks
- Mid tier record keeping
- Young orchards



We also ran an overview event for both the Hedges and Boundaries grant scheme and the mid tier scheme.

After a series of mid tier mini workshops 9 members submitted mid tier applications and one member submitted a high tier application all of which were successful.

The aim of this project is to deliver landscape scale benefits to the Avon Valley, the programme is led by members who suggest topics of interest.

The value of the mid - tier funding for these businesses will be in excess of £250,000 over 5 years.

### Bee activities at Big day out on the farm



## Events and Shows

We ran a series of events throughout the year. The most popular were Lambing Sunday and Open Farm Sunday with over 100 attendees at each. Big Night out on the Beach attracted over 500 participants.



We attended Totnes, Yealmpton and Kingsbridge one day shows as well as Celebrate Start Bay during the summer, which gave us a chance to engage with lots of locals and the visitors to the area with some fun competitions covering pollinator and foodie themes.

## Bees in South Devon

This project is a partnership between the South Devon AONB and the University of Exeter. The project consists of a four year PhD position, held by Raluca Herascu, which aims to better understand how bees navigate in their natural environment. By carrying out experiments in the AONB, the research hopes to shed light on how the natural features of the landscape affect the way in which bees navigate and forage.

The project also makes use of innovative new technologies to tag and track bee movement. By fitting bees with microchip 'backpacks', the bees can scan in and out of their colonies, allowing their movements to be monitored and analysed.

The research team hopes that the results of this project will help to inform land management practices in South Devon as well as further afield. By having a better understanding of how bees forage, we may be able to help create and maintain landscapes that encourage wild bee populations.

Funding for this project comes from the Natural Environment Research Council.

Activities so far:

- Field based experiments in the Avon Valley, East Charleton and further afield in Totnes
- School visit and workshop at Charleton Primary School
- Educational exhibition at the 2016 Totnes and District Agricultural Show



Bee with tracker device fitted!



Introducing the water cycle to primary school pupils



Annual forum display

## South Devon Catchments Partnership

As the co-hosting organisation, alongside the Westcountry Rivers Trust, we engaged in a number of projects under the banner of 'Addressing Nutrients in South Devon' that aimed to help reduce excess nutrients pollution entering the Slapton Ley and Salcombe-Kingsbridge estuary that included: working with the local schools and parishes of the Frogmore Creek to highlight local water quality as a wider community issue and how we might all improve it; wider community awareness through the Harbours and Town Tourist Guides, local events and media.

Due to their influence on the wider AONB landscape, catchment awareness and water quality conservation has very much become part of the everyday AONB ethos and work – from reinforcing the benefits of recycling kitchen food waste to encouraging more sustainable household drainage. During this time, we explored the opportunity and commissioned a short-animated film to encourage more awareness of water quality matters but in a novel and quirky way.



## South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership

Outreach and awareness raising remains a mainstay of our estuaries and coastal conservation work, with events from Crabfest stalls showing off the many species of crabs along our shores to a seagrass meadow walk to explore where our seahorses live; from working with local schools to explore their local waters to group talks on estuaries conservation.

Our estuaries work has very deliberately taken more of a Catchment Based Approach as many of the water borne issues that affect our estuaries have their source upstream. Our estuary forum and management group meetings have been well attended and we continue to work towards a wider community group for the Dart estuary. The year saw the publication of our new Estuaries Management Plan now covering our five local estuaries, the aquatic sections of our new Planning Guidance and work on a suite of individual Estuary Biosecurity Plans to raise greater awareness of invasive marine species and the need for their active prevention.

## Annual Forum & Celebration

Our annual forum was staged at Thurlestone Village Hall with the focus of Health and Wellbeing.

Our speakers emphasised the importance of the great outdoors to promoting health and wellbeing. The event started with a short walk which demonstrated very well the points that were made and a number of organisations including the 'Health Walks' scheme mounted displays.

## Planning

Over the past 12 months we have formally reviewed over 40 planning applications.

They have included housing developments, hotel development/refurbishments, sports pitches and pavilions and a new primary school.

The Planning Guidance document development work has concluded and will shortly be finalised and launched. It is hoped that a wide number of interests involved in the planning process will benefit including Neighbourhood Planning groups, planning professionals and architects. In the longer term it is anticipated that key parts of it will become a supplementary planning document.

## Local Action Group South Devon Coastal

The AONB Unit is represented on the LAG committee and is delighted this group has commenced allocating funding to businesses in South Devon. One of the first to be successful was Hunts Cider from Stoke Gabriel who secured a grant for a new cross-flow filter.

This will increase production, efficiency, quality and create a new job. We look forward to several more projects coming forward from the area. Projects need to be rural in nature and with economic development being the main focus. More information at [www.drcompany.co.uk](http://www.drcompany.co.uk).



# AONB Unit financial profile 2016-2017

## Core costs & income

The **core costs** of the AONB staff unit were jointly funded.

### AONB Unit core income

Defra	£119,000	73.6%
Devon County Council	£17,919	11.1%
South Hams District Council	£20,749	12.8%
Torbay Council	£3,000	1.9%
Plymouth City Council	£1,000	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£161,668</b>	<b>100%</b>

### AONB Unit core expenditure

Direct staff costs incl. travel, training, etc.	£92,362	57.1%
Office costs and support services	£19,084	11.8%
Communication costs	£5,543	3.4%
Commissioned specialist work	£8,925	5.5%
Partnership Committee support costs	£1,648	1.0%
Other core expenditure	£34,106	21.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£161,668</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Contribution to partnership programmes

In addition to the direct project expenditure run through the AONB Staff Unit budget, the Unit was also involved in part-funding or jointly leading a number of wider partnership projects where the project spend was run through other organisations or budgets. These included the following two project programmes:

### Slapton Adaptation Project

Total spend 2016 - 2017 was £15,255. Funded through a separate budget held by South Hams District Council on behalf of the Slapton Line Partnership.

### Wembury Marine Centre

Total spend on building management for 2016 - 2017 was £9,339. The building management budget is held by South Hams District Council and the warden costs budget is held by Devon Wildlife Trust on behalf of the funding partners.

**The total value of the AONB Unit plus its direct projects and indirect partnership projects, during the year (that is, the total of all the figures above) was £344,300.**

## Direct project costs & income

The **project costs** directly incurred by the AONB Unit budget were funded by a wider range of sources:

### AONB Unit direct project income

Defra	£32,912	20.8%
South Hams District Council	£19,900	12.6%
Other project grants	£3,100	2.0%
Environment Agency / Westcountry Rivers Trust	£17,500	11.1%
Natural England	£48,000	30.4%
Devon County Council	£3,000	1.9%
Miscellaneous income	£3,278	2.1%
Salcombe Harbour Authority	£10,500	6.6%
Dart Harbour and Navigation Authority	£2,500	1.6%
Duchy of Cornwall	£7,150	4.5%
National Trust	£4,000	2.5%
AONB funds carried forward	£6,198	3.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£158,039</b>	<b>100%</b>

### AONB Unit direct project expenditure

Estuary project costs	£43,521	27.5%
“Explorer” publication, events programme and outreach work	£5,635	3.6%
Community projects staff costs and associated work	£30,947	19.6%
River catchment coordination and project delivery	£8,027	5.1%
B-Lines development and research	£1,244	0.8%
AONB planning guidance	£7,922	5.0%
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Programme	£12,224	7.7%
Brixham-Kingswear peninsula	£4,000	2.5%
Wembury corridors and connections development	£6,000	3.8%
Bid development and project development	£350	0.2%
Rate my view / Landscape connect development	£18,833	11.9%
Growing Orchard Communities	£13,490	8.5%
Sustainable Development Fund	£5,845	3.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£158,039</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Photo credits:** P2 © Jim Carfrae, P4 Orchard photos © Growing Orchard Communities project, others South Devon AONB Unit, P5 Sea Horse © The Shark Trust. All others contributed or © South Devon AONB Unit. Design by South Hams District Council.



The South Devon AONB Unit, Follaton House,  
Plymouth Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5NE  
Telephone - **01803 861384**  
Email - [enquiries@southdevonaonb.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@southdevonaonb.org.uk)  
Website - [www.southdevonaonb.org.uk](http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk)

The AONB Unit is funded by:

