

Annual Review

2015-2016





Chairman's Foreword

Welcome to this Annual Review of the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

I was appointed as Chairman of the Partnership Committee in 2015, following Rosemary Rowe. On behalf of the Partnership I would like to thank Rosemary for her contribution over the past eight years, during which she has served as vice Chairman and acting Chairman.

We have successfully completed a broad range of projects working with so many partners, it is rewarding to be able to highlight just one or two of the many successes that result from so many co-ordinated contributions.

The national roll out of the 'Rate My View' app showcasing leading edge use of new technology developed in South Devon with Plymouth University. Meanwhile we continue to deeply root relationships with the Parish Councils and local communities, for example completing the Routeways and Connections Project at Kingswear and launching the new Community Orchard Project with 22 groups.

We are leading partnerships between authorities, users and interest groups to prepare the South Devon Estuaries Management Plan for final approval, balancing many requirements of our unique and nationally important

estuaries and coastline. Working on landscape scale conservation, the Avon Valley Countryside Facilitation Project supports 86 individual landowners to work with Natural England. Our communications and community work continues to highlight events led by the AONB team and partners so that everyone can learn about this very special place and the work needed to sustain it.

The AONB Planning Guidance document has been drafted for wider consultation this year coinciding with the Local Plan that has been prepared by our partners on a larger scale. These two documents demonstrate both the need for homes and development as well as our response to ensure that we can sensitively adapt to these needs whilst maintaining the character of this very special landscape.

We are grateful that DEFRA has committed funding for the next 4 years and the continued support of all our funding partners that enables us to ensure that we are well prepared to adapt to fast changing demands. I would also like to thank the Partnership Committee for their guidance and the AONB team for their expertise and effort contributing to this successful year.

Andrew Pratt

Chairman, South Devon AONB Partnership Committee

Highlights in 2015-2016



Launch of the Orchards project at Sharpham House

Growing Orchard Communities

We are very pleased to be working with Orchard Link on a new community orchards project. We have been successful in securing £40,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and just over £35,000 from the public and private sector. This will fund a range of community development activities as well as landscape improvements and enhancements in the orchards.

The two-year project was launched in November 2015 at an event at Sharpham House which was attended by 40 community orchard volunteers.

22 community orchard groups are taking part in the project. They are spread from the edge of Plymouth right over through Torbay and from the coast up to the edge of Dartmoor. There is a great range of sites and groups, which means that there will be plenty of expertise and shared experience to draw upon and learn from.

The project will be managed by a steering group made up of members of the Orchard Link committee, supported by the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team.

The training workshops started in January and will continue throughout the project. During this project there will be many exciting activities, training, networking and skill sharing opportunities which aim to support local people to manage healthy orchards for the whole community to enjoy.

Catchment Connections



This work was funded by a grant from the Environment Agency and relates to our Catchment Based Approach work. The aim of the project was to look at ways of strengthening community connections to the water catchment.

Local school children worked with artists to create songs and write poems inspired by their studies of the water catchment.

Pupils learn from Estuaries Officer, Nigel Mortimer

These were then performed at two local public events. They also developed games and tools that other children could use to learn about the water catchment. These are shared on our website. We have also produced a short film - Me and my Catchment. Artists travelled the area inviting people to consider their personal connections with the water catchment. Other work involved working with a local community to find out more about their local catchment connections and developing and trialling ways of local water based businesses to become 'Catchment Champions.'

Annual Forum

The 2015 event was staged at the historic Lupton House near Brixham. It was chaired by our Patron Jonathan Dimpleby and the theme was '50 years of the Neptune Coastal Campaign.' David Ford General Manager for South Devon and East Devon National Trust presented the history of the campaign and what its implications have been for the South Devon coastline. Jonathan Dimpleby shared memories of his father David Dimpleby covering the story at the campaign's launch. A lively discussion followed, debating the very real pressures on the coastline in the 21st Century.

The debate chaired by Jonathan Dimpleby



Left to Right: Rosemary Rowe Acting Chairman, Jonathan Dimpleby Patron, David Ford National Trust - Speaker, Robin Toogood AONB Manager



Teenagers enjoy Parkour activity, near Brixham

Brixham and Kingswear Peninsula Connections

During the Spring and Summer we led a project on the Peninsula to develop new and creative ways of getting people out and exploring their local countryside, deepening their understanding and connection with the landscape. You can find out more about this work on our website <http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/explore/my-aonb/brixham-and-kingswear-peninsula-connections>

Routeways and Connections was a project funded by £10,000 from the Heritage Lottery. We worked with arts organisation Encounters Arts and a project group involving colleagues and organisations working in the peninsula – Lupton Trust, National Trust, Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, South Devon Green Infrastructure project and local community representatives.

During the project we worked with 4 artists, 17 different groups and organisations and involved just over 750 participants. Some activities were open to anyone and others were targeted at traditionally 'hard to reach' groups.

This project has been a great success and we are working with partners to ensure the legacy of the hard work involved.



Launch of the Facilitation group

The initial challenge was to ensure that members were supported to access the new mid-tier stewardship scheme. We staged 10 mini workshops involving 25 of the Avon Valley group members. Overall there were 15 applications endorsed however 5 applicants decided for various reasons not to proceed once they had received their offers.

Several other training and events have taken place, including:

- Wood-fuel from hedges
- Pollinators
- Hedges and Boundaries grant
- Knapsack sprayer training
- Parasite management
- Bats in the landscape

We are currently engaged in assessing specific training needs for the future. This project promises to be an excellent way of fostering collaboration within the farming community and helping to understand the challenges they face.

Countryside Stewardship Facilitation workshop





Estuary enjoyment



Preparation of Yellow Fish sticker for road drains

South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership

Formally reviewing our five individual management plans into one has been a significant part of our work this period and like our outreach work has taken a far more Catchment Based Approach. Encouraging an active awareness of water quality issues is obviously a mainstay of our estuaries work and in particular our concern of understanding the cause and effect of the Kingsbridge creeks dinoflagellate blooms to potentially manage them in the future.

In September we helped organise the first Salcombe Bioblitz, a tremendous 24hr survey of the life centred around North Sands, south of Salcombe recording 1109 species of plant, seaweed, fungi and animals. Over the course of the 24+ hours of the event, 11 timetabled, public-participation activities took place, including scientific surveys and guided walks. More than 250 people attended, including 75 local school children, and over 150 volunteer experts and enthusiasts, families and members of the public. Full event report www.bit.ly/1Mnz2h6

South Devon's Catchments Based Approach (CABA)

The South Devon AONB's Estuaries Officer led on the CaBA work within the AONB team; whilst the main priority of his work has been estuaries, he has ensured that this has taken a more active whole catchments approach and is included within the formal review of the South Devon Estuaries Management Plan and our outreach programme.

Bioblitz team ready for action at North Sands, Salcombe



■ Yellow Fish road drain markers

working with local schools, Town Councils and Local Authorities, we marked a proportion of the higher profile road drains with specially designed markers to reinforce the frequently direct link between drain and local natural water course. This involved work with the schools on water catchment science and awareness, wider community awareness and will remain part of our future work.

■ CABA awareness raising events

our local events and shows encourage a more conscious connection between where we live and work, and the health of our favourite beaches and watersports areas downstream.

■ Salcombe Harbour users engagement

in partnership with the Salcombe Harbour Authority and Board, we produced a Harbour 'Head* Hanger' (* boat toilet) encouraging the use of shore-side facilities – given out to all vessel owners and visitors; produced a water care page within the 2016 Harbour Guide - see right.





Open Farm Sunday at Quarry Farm

Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat project



Stoke Gabriel habitat walk

Following a successful outcome to a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant application, the Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project moved in September 2015 from its development phase into delivery work thanks to a grant of £707,000. The project led by Devon Wildlife Trust on behalf of a partnership involving 18 other organisations, including the South Devon AONB will work over five years to secure the long term future of the Greater horseshoe bat.

Activity is focussed on 11 priority areas across the county of Devon around each of the key roost sites, including

the central and eastern parts of South Devon AONB. Following a population crash over the last 100 years greater horseshoe bats cling on in a few special Devon landscapes including that of the South Devon AONB at Berry Head, Dartmouth, the Avon Valley and nearby Harbertonford. Between September 2015 and March 2016 the project and its partners have: worked with roost owners to improve roost conditions; begun safeguarding the surrounding countryside that provides

food for the bats; gathered new up to date bat data: and improved community knowledge and understanding of this species. The project, already ahead of schedule, is starting to put the greater horseshoe bats back on the map, conserving high quality landscape and a species that Devon can be proud of.



Diptford Primary School bat display

Planning

During this 12 months we have reviewed and commented on 30 planning apps and 2 pre applications. These have included housing developments, holiday parks, hotel redevelopment and educational facilities. Once the Planning Guidance Document is finalised in December, it should make things clearer for applicants and planning professionals.

Big Night Out (right)

Events & Shows

The AONB has continued to deliver a programme of events focussed on specific projects. The most well attended were the Big night out on the beach attracting 500 people, with both Lambing Sunday and Open Farm Sunday attracting over 100. We attended Yealmpton, Totnes and Kingsbridge one day shows and Celebrate Start Bay. These events were a great opportunity to engage with the public and share information about the 'More than the View' research which demonstrated the economic value of protected landscapes.



Publications

We published the second edition of the "Discover" map leaflet in the autumn and the Explorer leaflet with events from March to October, in the Spring. These are aimed at informing both residents and visitors about the AONB. There is lots of useful information about walking routes, ideas for days out, events, beaches, heritage and local food and drink.

Website

It is pleasing to see the number of visits to the site grow substantially during this year

The 'Explore' section is most popular in particular walks and trails which had 53,665 total visits!

The next most popular section is 'About the AONB' with the majority of people wanting to view the Map of the AONB.

Total visits – 77,744 (56,227 the previous year)

Total users – 64,399 (46,048 the previous year)

Total page views – 209,478 (167,239 the previous year)



AONB Unit financial profile 2015-2016

Core costs & income

The **core costs** of the AONB staff unit (four staff) were funded jointly by Defra, Devon County Council and South Hams District Council.

AONB Unit core income

Defra	£117,292	72.9%
Devon County Council	£22,919	14.2%
South Hams District Council	£20,749	12.9%
Total	£160,960	100%

AONB Unit core expenditure

Direct staff costs incl. travel, training, etc.	£104,810	65.1%
Office costs and support services	£33,799	21.0%
Communication costs	£6,933	4.3%
Commissioned specialist work	£12,828	8.0%
Partnership Committee support costs	£2,590	1.6%
Total	£160,960	100%

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 2015 - 2016 was £8,256. Project managed by AONB Staff Unit. 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 2015 - 2016 was £11,722. Management group chaired by AONB Manager. 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 £322,522.

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	31,746	18.9%
Torbay Council	£5,000	4.2%
Plymouth City Council	1,000	0.6%
South Hams District Council	19,900	11.8%
Section 106	30,000	17.9%
Environment Agency / Westcountry Rivers Trust	25,100	14.9%
Parish Councils	500	0.3%
Natural England	13,630	8.1%
Devon County Council	£3,000	3.0%
Miscellaneous income	£515	0.4%
Salcombe Harbour Authority	10,400	6.2%
Duchy of Cornwall	7,150	4.3%
National Trust	1,000	0.6%
Total	£168,063	100%

AONB Unit direct project expenditure

Estuary project costs	£45,823	27.3%
"Explorer" publication, events programme and outreach work	£8879	5.3%
Community projects staff costs and associated work	£32585	19.4%
River catchment coordination and project delivery	£4271	6.7%
Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat partnership project	£4,500	2.7%
B-Lines	£1540	0.9%
Planning Guidance	£3500	2.1%
Light pollution research	£500	0.3%
Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Programme	£20488	2.7%
Brixham-Kingswear peninsula	£6921	4.1%
Bid development and project development commitments	£30,877	0.6%
Woodfuel development	£1210	0.7%
Growing Orchard Communities	£2612	1.6%
Sustainable Development Fund	£4357	2.6%
Total	£168,063	100%



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