

ITEM 7: Art in the Landscape Strategy: connecting people to nature through art and culture

ITEM FOR	Decision	REPORT BY	
SUMMARY	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.		
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	Future voluntary contributions may be requested by NAAONB		
RECOMMENDATION	<p>1. The AONB Board adopts the Arts in the Landscape Strategy and participates in coordinated national and local action resulting from the Strategy.</p> <p>2. While there can be no commitment at the moment, the Board would consider a possible future contribution to the collective Arts in Landscape fund, in particular the proposed 5-year national post that will provide a resource to all AONBs.</p>		

1. Background

A strategy has been created for adoption 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.

It helps the AONB Network achieve its Colchester Declaration aims, and those of Glover's National Landscape Review around:

- 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

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.

2. Relevance to the Surrey Hills AONB

Surrey Hills AONB's Special Qualities include the rich legacy of cultural associations with place. Such cultural associations past, present and future, offer a source of inspiration to us all and may help develop new ways of understanding and managing the AONB. The Surrey Hills landscape continues to attract artists, writers and musicians to visit and live.

Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan aims & objectives:

2.7 CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT POLICIES:

HC1 A historic perspective of how the AONB landscape has evolved will be promoted, including its traditions, industries, buildings and settlement patterns.

HC4 The rich artistic traditions of the Surrey Hills will be promoted. New artistic interpretations of the landscape and its heritage will be commissioned with the involvement of local communities.

RECREATION, HEALTH AND WELLBEING MANAGEMENT PLAN POLICIES:

RT1 Visitors and facilities that enhance people's health, enjoyment and understanding of the Surrey Hills will be encouraged, whilst conserving or enhancing the landscape character and biodiversity.

RT2 Information will be made accessible for a diverse range of potential visitors in order to foster a greater understanding and enjoyment of the Surrey Hills AONB.

RT3 Significant viewpoints and vistas will be identified, conserved and enhanced.

Experience & activity:

Surrey Hills are the first AONB to have a dedicated arts programme. Initiated in 2015 this has delivered projects across the artforms and across the breadth of the AONB attracting external funding, multiple partnerships and recognition nationally. The programme of events, artworks and projects create meaningful engagements with the landscape, develop emerging artists and draw new, diverse audiences. Ali Clarke sits on the National Arts Steering Group.

3. Strategy Development

The 'National Moment' in 2019, supported by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, 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.

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."

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

The Art in The Landscape Strategy was formally adopted at the NAAONB Annual General Meeting in November 2020.

4. Art in the Landscape Strategy: Vision and Aims

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.

5. Art in the Landscape Strategy: Summary of Recommendations

1. Adopt the National Arts Strategy

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

We recommend 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 take place over a specified period, such as Spring, or at the same time across the country 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

Recommendations:

- The AONBs work through arts and culture programmes to establish meaningful links, connections and visits with communities with higher levels of people from minority ethnic/cultural and diverse 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 board 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

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.