

1. DEFRA announce new scheme including support for Farmers in 'protected landscapes'

The Government has announced an 'Agricultural Transition Period' that will see Direct Payments and existing agri-environment schemes phased out from 2021 in preparation for the new Environmental Land Management scheme. Farmers in 'protected landscapes', such as AONBs, will be supported to diversify their income streams and lay the groundwork for Environmental Land Management. Government has indicated more information will be made available in early 2021. See

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/940434/atp-adviser-pack.pdf

2. Small grant awards made to AONB team

The AONB team is delighted to accept grants from Natural England (NE) and Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL that trade locally as Essex and Suffolk Water) and Cllr Peter Stevens locality budget (PS) for:

- £4,000 in Dedham Vale AONB for Dormouse, Swift and Stag Beetle projects (from NE)
- £5,000 in Coast & Heaths AONB for Redshank and mapping work in AONB (from NE)
- £4,500 In Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley to support River Restoration projects (from NWL)
- £500 (confirmation of previous offer) in Stour Valley for works to Stour Valley Path (from PS)

3. Simon Armitage's Laurel Prize for Poetry 2021

The largest eco-poetry prize in the world have asked if the AONBs would like to partner with them again in 2021. Last year's second placed Karen McCarthy-Woolf will be working with Coast and Heaths AONB in 2021. Further details to follow.

4. Changes to the AONB team

It is with a considerable amount of sadness to say that Kat Davies and Cathy Smith are leaving the AONB team at the end of 2020. Kat has delivered the LEADER funded 'Improving the Stour Valley for Visitors' project with great skill in a difficult environment and the outputs are a terrific legacy of her work. Cathy leaves her role as Funding and Development Officer where she has done outstanding work delivering the AONB grant programmes, developed several externally funded projects, and worked with a huge range of partners to deliver AONB objectives. We wish them both well for the new chapters in their lives.

The AONB team has just heard that it has been successful in its bid for Government 'Kickstart' funding to help young people at risk of long-term unemployment. We will be recruiting to two roles:

- A National Landscapes Technical Assistant: for research, GIS mapping, site surveys, working alongside other team members to roll-out the opportunity mapping approach to documenting AONB assets
- National Landscapes Communications Assistant: To support delivery of communications outputs, including website editing, social media, production of promotional materials

5. Changes to EDF Energy Application for Sizewell C: Response from AONB Partnership

The AONB Partnership has made comments on the EDF Energy consultation on changes to its proposals made shortly after the closing date for Relevant Representations. The comments can be viewed at:

<https://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/managing/planning/nationally-significant-infrastructure/>

It raises concerns about increased impacts on the nationally designated AONB from the proposed changes.

6. Quick bits:

- AONB team will be working with SOS Swifts in 2021 to install 58 Swift Boxes and 9 callers
- AONB Nature Recovery work. A short film updating showing what the team are doing at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xBrfAmdhHZIPV5Yww-um5CZnszql4umX/view?usp=sharing>
- Fen bridge remains closed but the Highways Authority are developing plans and a funding package for a replacement
- John Constable sketch initially deemed a copy sells for almost £100,000 see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-55231410>
- Google Maps now shows recent extension to Coast & Heaths AONB

Wishing you the best Christmas you can have. Stay safe. Support those less fortunate than yourself at this time

Simon Amstutz, AONB Manager, 23 Dec 2020

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