

Environmental Report September 2024
Cllr Roger Dollins

National Landscapes (Previous AONB)

The Mendip Hills National Landscape and Weston-super-Mare will feature as a major hub in a £2M ground-breaking national art project called Nature Calling. The project is funded by Arts Council England, the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) and National Landscapes in England.

Nature Calling is a first for National Landscapes because of its size, scope and the level of investment. It aims to inspire communities across England to connect with National Landscapes, increasing their access to nature, improving their wellbeing [1], and inspiring a sense of belonging in these special places [2].

Nature Calling will bring together the 34 National Landscapes in England, local arts organisations and community groups from within a 30-minute journey time of their nearby National Landscape. They will work together to co-create artworks inspired by these iconic places and the results will then be shared with the public in a Season of Art from May - October 2025. It is expected that 70,000 people will take part.

National Landscapes are the UK's nearby countryside. 66% of people in England (44 million) live within 30 minutes of a National Landscape, over 1 million people live within them and at least 170 million people visit every year. Nature Calling aims to encourage even more communities to feel welcome to enjoy these special places on their own terms.

Tim Haselden, Project Development Officer for the Mendip Hills National Landscape Team said:

"We're so excited to be part of Nature Calling and to be working with communities in Weston-super-Mare. We've partnered with Super Culture and commissioned Sound UK to help us inspire and connect local people with the Mendip Hills National Landscape and new Mendip 'super' National Nature Reserve. We're delighted to have a writer-artist collaboration between Jason Singh, Gwyneth Herbert and Chris Howard. As the project develops, we're looking forward to sharing more information about how people can get involved."

To find out more or to get involved, please visit www.naturecalling.org.uk

Biodiversity and Geodiversity Objectives:

BG1 Ensure that there is no net loss of characteristic habitats and species.

BG2 Promote a landscape scale approach to the conservation and expansion of coherent and resilient ecological networks within and adjoining the AONB.

BG3 Increase monitoring and awareness of the biodiversity resource of the Mendip Hills AONB so that it is sufficiently understood to continue to guide the successful conservation of the characteristic habitats and species.

BG4 Promote a holistic approach to implementing AONB Management Plan objectives, National Character Area Statements of Opportunity and a locally designated Nature Improvement Area's objectives

BG5 Recognise and celebrate geological sites and features of the Mendip Hills AONB to ensure the successful conservation both of the geology and wildlife habitat they provide.

BG6 Increase awareness of the Mendip Hills geology, particularly cave systems in relation to the importance they play in water management and water supply.

Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage objectives;

H1 Improve the recording, interpretation and understanding of all aspects of the AONBs historic environment to ensure local communities and visitors enjoy a rich experience of the sense of place.

H2 Increase awareness and communicate the significance of the high quality historic environment of the Mendip Hills AONB

H3 Promote appropriate management of sites, structures and landscapes designated for their international, national, regional or local importance in the historic environment to ensure no further loss of heritage assets.

Recreation, Access and Tourism objectives:

R1 Maintain, improve and promote public access and quiet recreational activities with measures to ensure access for all in accordance with the purposes of AONB designation.

R2 Support the development of tourism and day visits that benefits the local economy, conserves and enhances the landscape and improves understanding of the Mendip Hills.

R3 Develop and promote more sustainable methods of travel to and around the AONB for enjoyment and recreation.

R4 Support healthy lifestyles by encouraging more people to use the Mendip Hills for sustainable outdoor activities.

Natural Resources objectives:

N1 Recognise and promote the benefits and relevance of the AONB as a valuable source of ecosystem services, economic and health benefits.

N2 Promote conservation of water resources and enhance their quality taking measures to reduce low flows and flooding by appropriate management and use.

N3 Promote sustainable management of soils in accordance with best practice to minimise erosion and water pollution and maximise resilience to drought.

Land Management objectives:

LMI Support sustainable farming to ensure it remains as the principle land use and contributes to maintaining the special qualities of the AONB.

LM2 Support and promote rural land management that conserves and enhances natural resources, including biodiversity, landscape character the historic environment and aids public awareness and enjoyment of the Mendip Hills AONB.

More information from the meeting I attended on the 12th when the notes are completed. RD