

FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

Background

A national strategy has been created 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.

The Art in The Landscape Strategy was formally adopted at the NAAONB Annual General Meeting in November 2020 and all AONBs are invited to adopt the Strategy and participate in coordinated national and local action resulting from it. The Strategy helps the AONB Network achieve its Colchester Declaration aims around nature recovery, 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.

Relevance to the Forest of Bowland AONB

This aims and objectives of this national strategy are reflected in the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Plan as follows:

Objective 2.4 Community Engagement and Volunteering

Support local communities and businesses to become more involved in activities and projects to conserve, enhance and celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the AONB:

- ✓ *Action 2.4D - Deliver and support community engagement through the arts and other creative industries, particularly via Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership, which includes The Gatherings, Pendle Radicals and PendleFolk*

Objective 3.3 Discovering and Learning

Provide opportunities to discover and learn about the special qualities of the AONB by connecting people with nature, culture and landscape:

- ✓ *Action 3.3A - Organise, support and promote an annual Festival Bowland programme of AONB and partner-led events for both visitors and local communities*
- ✓ *Action 3.3F - Deliver 'outreach' activities to encourage a more diverse range of people to learn about, engage with and visit the AONB, particularly through Pendle Hill LP projects and activity*

Objective 3.4 Health and Wellbeing

Provide opportunities for people to improve their health and wellbeing by connecting with nature, culture and landscape:

- ✓ *Action 3.4B – Deliver projects and activities in the AONB that deliver health and wellbeing outcomes*

Strategy

A summary of the Aims and Recommendations of the Strategy are listed below, the full Strategy can be found [on the NAAONB website](#).

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.

Recommendations

The strategy recommendations are as follows:

1. **Adopt the National Arts Strategy**
The process of developing the Strategy was grounded in the consultation across the network. A nationally and locally endorsed strategy will have strong currency in discussions with external agencies, both national agencies such as government and funders and locally with partners, arts and cultural organisations.
2. **Deliver a National Creative Projects Programme**
Research responses also strongly advocated for national creative projects to be clustered around specific themes, e.g., dark skies, coasts, ceremonial landscapes and hill forts. Crucially the national creative projects need a simple artistic provocation at the centre. Further ideas will be created by inviting experienced artists from diverse backgrounds into the AONBs and allowing their thinking to imagine new possibilities

- 4. Widen the welcome**
The NAAONB and many individual AONBs want to take positive action to set about broadening the reach of the work, which will result in far more people feeling connected to nature and wanting to be proactive in their tendency to nature conservation. Arts and culture are an excellent way to do this.
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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.
- 7. 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.
- 8. 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.
- 9. Create a Core National Resource**
Research and consultation identified the benefit and catalysing impact of a core national resource would have - encouraging, inspiring, supporting and advocating for arts and culture within the sector and beyond.
- 10. 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.

Decision Required

The Committee is requested to:

- i) note the report and offer comments
- ii) approve the formal adoption of this national strategy and the participation in national activities and project development by the AONB unit