

Keeping the Wye Valley Special



Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru
Countryside Council for Wales



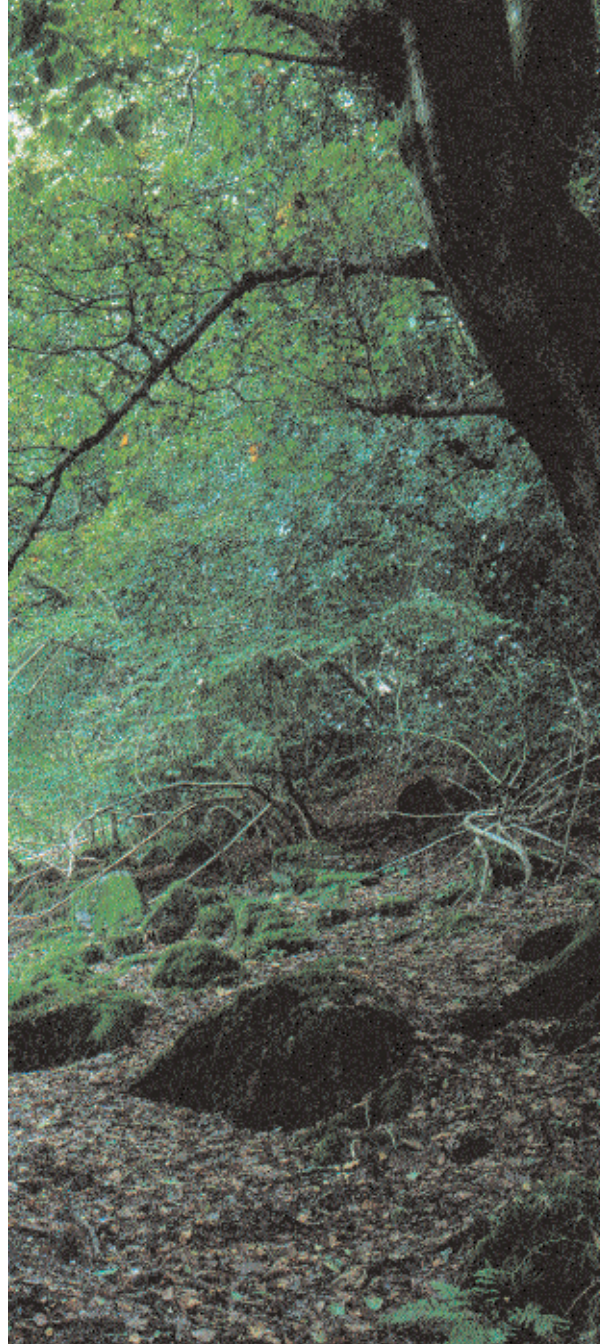
Forest of Dean
District Council



HEREFORDSHIRE
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Stay in touch by reading our newsletter 'Picturesque', available from local libraries, village shops and other outlets or contact us and ask to go on the mailing list. You can also read it, and lots more, on our website.

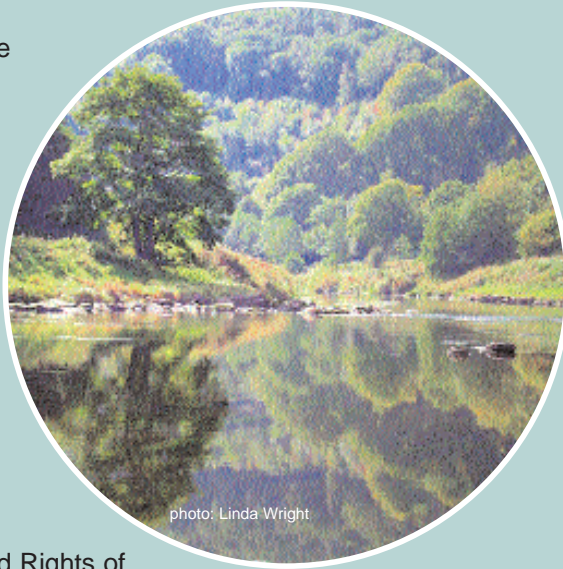
Wye Valley AONB, Hadnock Road,
Monmouth NP25 3NG
www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

design **stephen paul dale design** 01633 665793
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A national treasure

The stunning landscape of the lower Wye Valley is one of our national treasures. Since 1971, its Government designation as an "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" or 'AONB' has ensured its special qualities are protected, conserved and enhanced. Now, a new Management Plan for the area provides a vision for its future and a framework to guide the actions of everyone who looks after this unique part of our countryside.



Why do we need a plan?

It is a requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It formalises the commitment to this nationally protected landscape of the Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council. It identifies the role of the statutory agencies and many voluntary organisations working to keep this area special. The 1981 and 1992 AONB Management Plans were voluntary and non-statutory documents. This statutory plan, covering the five years to 2009, was produced by the Wye Valley AONB unit and its Joint Advisory Committee on behalf of the four local authorities. Many aspects of the plan have been nationally recognised as examples of best practice.

Your role

This plan has also been developed for individuals, landowners, local farmers and anyone who lives or works in the AONB, and those who visit and enjoy the area. You can help us ensure that we hand on to the next generation an area still worthy of its designation.

Themes and aims

The State of the AONB report in the plan lists the special qualities of the area. The plan then outlines the priorities for action under five key themes.

- Conserving and, where necessary, enhancing the natural beauty of **our unique landscape** is the primary theme. This addresses the components of natural beauty: the landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and the cultural heritage, along with the dominant land uses of farming and forestry, that sustain the landscape.
- Planning the protection of the AONB through appropriate **development and transport** is the second theme. This covers the development, infrastructure and protection of the landscape
- Safeguarding rural industries and local socio-economic needs that maintain **vital communities** is the third theme. This addresses the vibrancy of the local communities and the viability of local businesses that sustain the landscape features.
- Ensuring that the general public are **enjoying the AONB** in sustainable ways is the fourth theme, promoting appreciation of the special landscape features by everyone generally and through tourism and recreation.
- Managing and governing the AONB effectively to ensure we are **achieving success together** is the fifth theme. This addresses the need to continue proactive and imaginative achievements in the AONB through successful and productive partnerships.

You can view the full Wye Valley AONB Management Plan at the libraries in Chepstow, Cinderford, Coleford, Hereford, Lydney, Monmouth and Ross-on-Wye. From early 2005 you can read it in full on our website.



The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a landscape of striking contrasts, from majestic meanders crossing the gentle Herefordshire countryside to the spectacular gorge through the Forest of Dean and Trellech plateaux. The area covers 128 square miles (326km²) from Checkley to Chepstow Castle. It includes 45 miles (72km) of the lower reaches of the River Wye.



Shrouding the valley sides is one of the largest remaining areas of semi-natural broadleaved woodland in the UK. 27% of the AONB is woodland.



The Wye Tour was immensely fashionable 200 years ago and the valley was much described, drawn and painted. Many picturesque and romantic viewpoints still provide spectacular views.

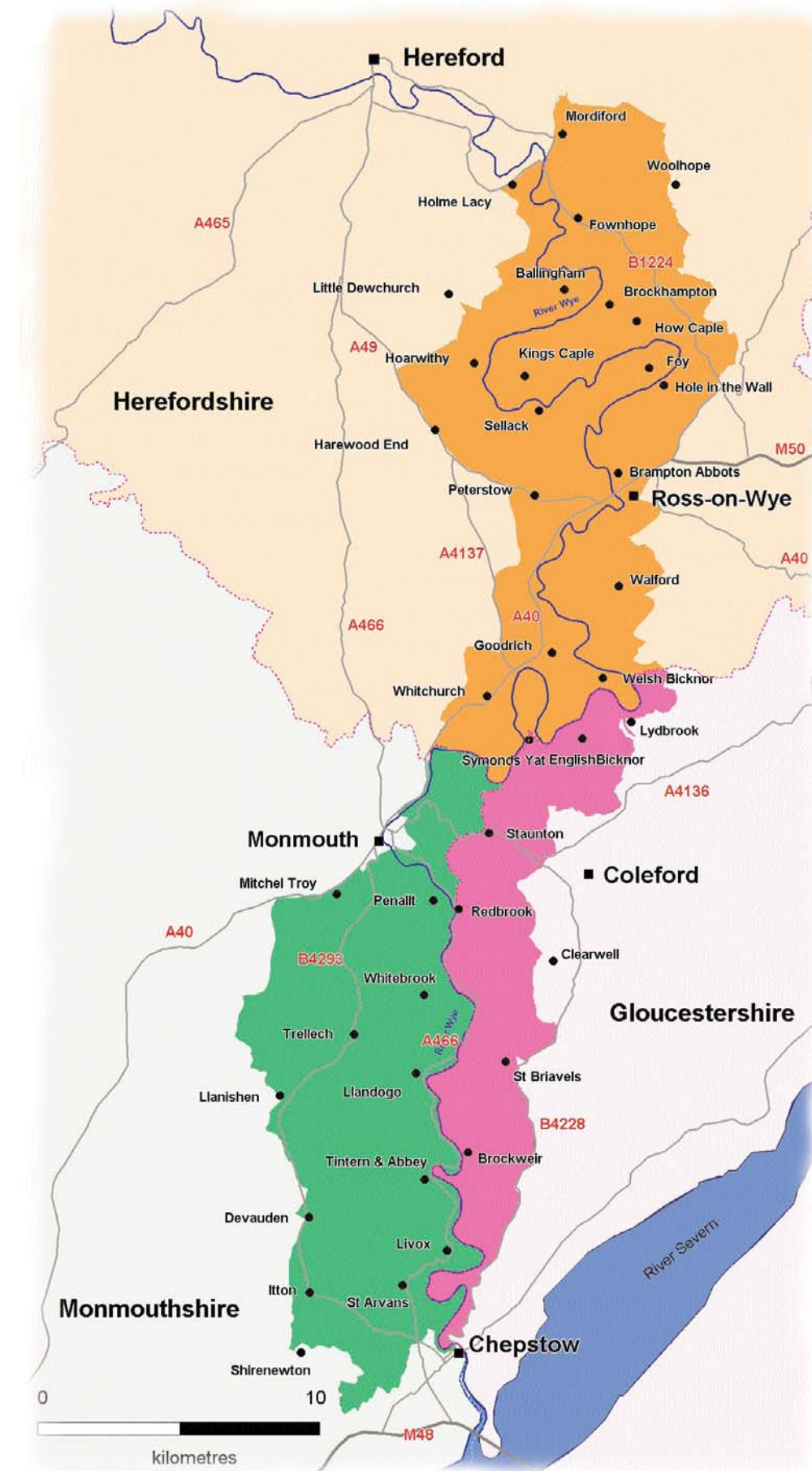


photo © Archie Miles

The rich diversity of boundary habitats is particularly important; e.g. between grassland & woodland, farmland & heathland, tidal river & ancient woodland, hedges &/or drystone walls, lanes, banks, verges, fields & woods



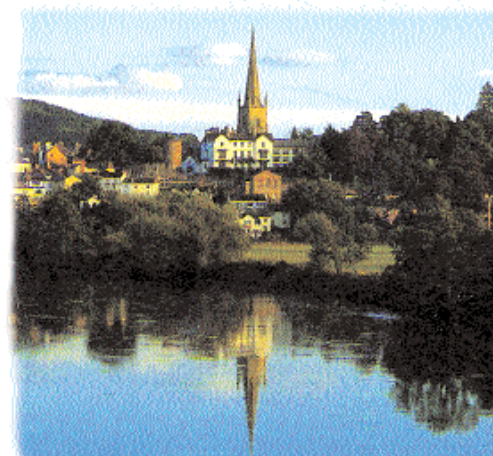
In this rural area (population 25,000) many people make a living from the high quality environment through tourism, agriculture or forestry.



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Administratively complex, the AONB is 36% in Monmouthshire (Wales), 46% in Herefordshire (West Midlands region) and 18% in Gloucestershire, in the Forest of Dean District (South West region).



The picturesque market town of Ross-on-Wye (population 10,000) is the only town within the AONB.



photo: Nanette Hendy

Quiet enjoyment of the countryside is the most popular activity. There is good public access including 52 miles of the Wye Valley Walk and 17 miles of the Offa's Dyke Path, and large areas of Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust land.



photo: Linda Wright

The outstanding heritage, with hill forts, Roman remains, Offa's Dyke, Marcher Castles, Tintern Abbey and early industrial sites are all special and irreplaceable parts of our cultural inheritance.



The river and the woodlands are of international importance and designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).



photo © Archie Miles

Agricultural land makes up 58% of the AONB. The majority is in intensive production – just 3% is farmed non-intensively.