

Involvement and Learning

*'How Wide Are
Your Eyes Open?'*





The world looks different



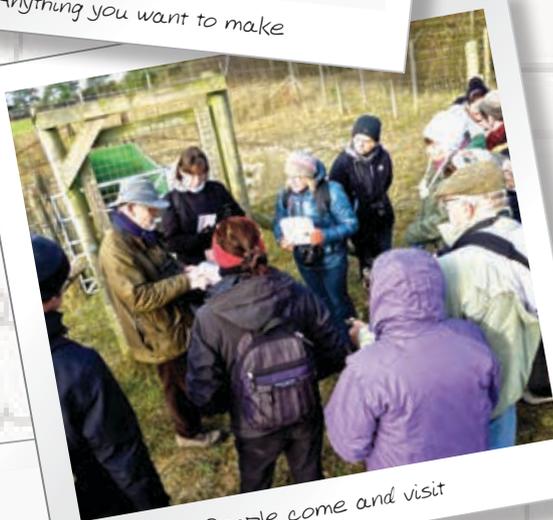
Anything you want to make

How Wide Are Your Eyes Open?

Boredom and eccentricity
A dangerous combination
Andrew's threading string
Precisely bored holes
Fourteenth century helmet
Anything you want to make
Is a problem to solve.

Ian is a Blacksmith
Making a millstone
Heating up a band of metal
Wrapping it round stones
Tightening it up like a cartwheel
Stuff that lasts,
Colin comes in from the cold
He's an engineer
Building by hand
The Viking Long Cabin.

Kids come and visit
Never been to a wood before
Ten varieties of trees,
Not just one.
Deer tracks
And the light goes on
The world looks different.



People come and visit



And the light goes on



Stuff that lasts



How wide are your eyes open

16. Involvement and Learning

Volunteering is a means of becoming more personally involved in the local area whilst developing a range of practical and personal skills to help conserve and enhance it. Using the AONB as an educational resource for schools will help youngsters gain a better insight into the countryside around them.

16.1. Special characteristics and qualities that make this AONB special, as a whole, with regards to involvement and learning:

- The quality and diversity of the AONB's natural, historic and cultural environment provides the widest range of opportunities for volunteering and learning.
- Requests for AONB presentations continue to rise.
- The AONB can be reached in 20-30 minutes by around ½ million people.
- There is a wide range of opportunities for involvement in practical tasks, educational activity with schools or desk-based research in the AONB.
- There is a growing recognition and interest in the value of learning and developing rural skills for young people in the AONB.
- There is great potential for dovetailing and complementing activity at the proposed Tisbury Community Hub and the existing Shaftesbury Technical Skills College.
- There is interest from three agricultural colleges and independent trainers in establishing an AONB based countryside skills training centre.

Aim

16.2. We want people to learn about the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the AONB. We want people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to have the opportunity to take up countryside skills training and volunteering in the AONB.

Achievements to date

- **School visits** - The Team engaged in 40 school visits across the AONB over three years, reaching approximately 1,000 primary school children. The Team also hosts annual visits from Heritage Conservation undergraduates from Bournemouth and Bath Universities.
- **Talks** - Over four years the Farmland Bird Adviser has given talks to a total of 127 attendees, whilst delivering related training to 195 landowners, farmers and other advisers.
- **Volunteers** - 186 potential volunteers have offered time for a variety of work or research.
- **Guided walks** - Over 420 people have taken part in guided walks since 2009.



Key issues

1. Although some conservation bodies manage their own land or reserves for nature, there are fewer opportunities to undertake conservation work in the wider countryside of the AONB.
2. Although volunteers are willing to give their time for conservation work in the area, there are currently limited opportunities for involvement. The AONB has been recognised by many as an area with few opportunities or a base for volunteering; a 'black hole'.
3. There is a growing acknowledgment of, and interest in, the value of learning and developing rural skills. However, there is a recognised loss of traditional countryside skills in the AONB.

The Issues Explained

- 16.3. There are few substantive practical volunteer activities in the wider countryside of the area. Local and national nature reserves offer localised volunteer opportunities and the 'Leisure Credits' scheme⁴² in the AONB engages young people in practical environmental tasks and would like to expand. There are also several active volunteers and groups focused on access.
- 16.4. There is continued interest in active participation in caring for and learning about the AONB. A number of events organised by the AONB, such as guided walks and a one day conferences, have often been over-subscribed. Requests for AONB presentations continue to rise.
- 16.5. There is now an identified need⁴³ and support for a 'hub', or central base, for all types of volunteering, countryside skills training and a low key visitor centre. This could be achieved through a multifunctional AONB Countryside Centre.
- 16.6. This concept has generated interest from a wide range of people and organisations, many of whom would become partners. These partners will devise training and volunteering programmes for use in the centre that will harness the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm of many.

Partners could include - The BCTV, local agricultural colleges and training centres, Wiltshire College, and the Dorset Opportunities Programme, Duke of Edinburgh providers, Tisbury Community Hub, Leisure Youth Credits and other local projects.

'I believe that this would be an exciting opportunity for young people in the South West Wiltshire and North Dorset areas. There are lots of developing projects that this would link in with and there is some great potential to provide a centre that could offer training courses in rural skills and enable young people to access apprenticeship or employment opportunities within the local community. This would add significant value to the work of the Leisure Credits Young Enterprise Initiative supporting some of our young volunteers to move into Education, Employment or Training places'.

Wiltshire Youth Partnership

- 16.7. As well as providing a focus for this nationally important landscape, a Countryside Centre would offer:
 - Accredited training opportunities in countryside management skills, conservation, agriculture, forestry, livestock/animal husbandry and a variety of rural industry skills (e.g. blacksmithing).
 - A wide range of volunteering opportunities including natural history surveys, historic research and countryside management tasks.

⁴² The Leisure Credit Scheme involves young people in undertaking voluntary work and receiving Leisure Credits which are redeemed for reward trips or activities. The number of Credits a young person receives is based on how hard they worked and how well they worked as part of a team.

⁴³ Evidence compiled since 2005 and presented in bid for Leader funding 2011/12.



- Exciting recreational opportunities such as guided walks, dark night skies events and utilising all terrain mobility scooters for the less able.
- An opportunity to take part in or attend various art based activities focussed on the special qualities of the AONB.
- Professional, environmentally related CPD training courses for environmental professionals locally, regionally and from further afield, which could include for example, countryside, agricultural, forestry and land agency staff, those attached to all the nationally Protected Areas, the renewable energy sector and teachers/lecturers. Participants would be encouraged to stay locally.
- It will also act as a visitor centre for the area providing information on which events are on, what there is to see and do in the AONB and surrounding market towns, encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more locally.
- A facility for hire to external companies or organisations wanting to hold their own events or seminars.
- Environmental play schemes during the holiday periods , encouraging exchange of town/ country experiences.

16.8. The countryside management tasks completed by the volunteers will help to conserve and enhance the landscape of the AONB. The construction and running of the centre will demonstrate best practice. The intent is to use a variety of sustainable construction techniques and methods. It will demonstrate the use of green energy sources such as wood chip and solar power. Where feasible, volunteers or trainees will complete some of the construction work. The skills gained through the centre will improve the job prospects of trainees.

16.9. The loss of traditional skills is a significant issue for the future management of the landscape. A revival in such skills, and the ability to make a living from using them, should be encouraged.

16.10. With the increasing relocation of workers to the towns, traditional crafts and skills are being lost from communities within the AONB. Such workers are often less well paid and may move out of the AONB because of high house prices. Young people in the area have to travel a long way to attend county agricultural colleges and other training centres. For many, the lack and cost of public transport mean that accessing training in countryside skills is very difficult. Access to training (with accreditation) needs to be made available to everyone. The supply must be tailored to individual needs.



Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE	POLICIES
<p>IL A <i>A wide range of opportunities exist for residents and visitors to learn more about the AONB, volunteer or develop heritage and countryside skills</i></p>	<p>IL1 Proactively engage with volunteers offering their time and skills to the AONB from 2014 onwards</p>
	<p>IL2 Develop an Involvement and Learning Strategy setting out aims, objectives and action for increasing volunteering opportunities and improving countryside and heritage skills training within the AONB by the end of 2015.</p>
	<p>IL3 Establish an exemplar Countryside Centre;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue work to establish the first phase of an environmentally and financially sustainable 'Countryside Centre' within the AONB by the end of 2015, to act as the base for the AONB Partnership, volunteers, trainees, students and visitors• Ensure the 'Countryside Centre' is an exemplar with regard to green credentials e.g. green build techniques, energy efficiency, use of relevant renewable energy, waste minimisation, along with recognised green accreditation• Pursue two further proposed phases of Countryside Centre development by the end of this plan period through seeking additional funding and partners, as appropriate, to deliver interpretative provision for visitors and schools and supplementary opportunities to expand income streams
	<p>IL4 Harness community and volunteer commitment and interest in the AONB to develop art based learning and/or appreciation projects and activities</p>

(Additional Information: Involvement and Learning Appendix 36)







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When it gets dark,
it's dark

Colin, Ancient Technology Centre

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