

NATURE CONNECTEDNESS

Our commitment to nature

An outline of our proposals for nature connectedness
in the East Devon AONB



Nature Connectedness

As part of the National Association for AONBs [Colchester Declaration \(2019\)](#), AONBs have collectively committed to further engaging people in nature.

Nature connectedness, built on an understanding that human connection with nature increases a sense of care for our environment and provides benefits to our wellbeing, is the motivation for our pledge:

To enable an approach that creates opportunities within AONBs for people to make an emotional connection with nature, by July 2020

What we've done so far

The AONB team has delivered and supported a wide a range of projects and activities since 2002 that have enabled people to make a connection with nature.

These have ranged from work with schools and local groups on wildlife projects, habitat works and heritage initiatives, to support through our Sustainable Development Fund for community projects that have encouraged wider engagement in our natural environment.

Our programme of Heritage Lottery Funded activity has engaged communities across our area through natural and cultural heritage activities.



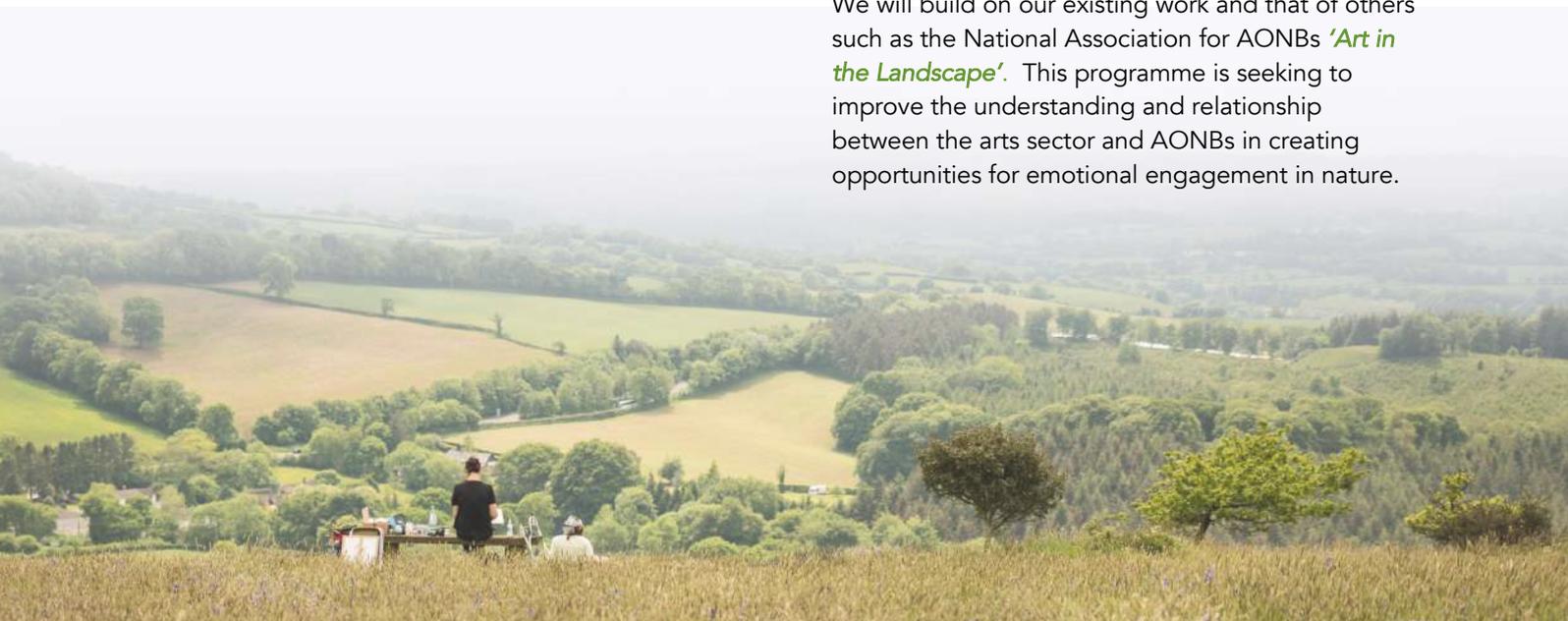
Bat event, Beer Quarry Caves

More recently, we have been developing our links with the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG), using the medium of art and creative activity to inspire and engage others; from children and students, to adults and the partially sighted.

Through a supported agreement with THG, we have celebrated 25yrs of the East Devon Way with an [arts engagement programme](#) and developed follow-on work between 2018-19.

This relationship has continued into 2020/21 with a [Climate/Culture 2020](#) programme linked to the growing climate change agenda, developed by THG with the Tate and Exeter University.

We will build on our existing work and that of others such as the National Association for AONBs '[Art in the Landscape](#)'. This programme is seeking to improve the understanding and relationship between the arts sector and AONBs in creating opportunities for emotional engagement in nature.



As part of the programme, the AONBs have collectively made a statement of Intent.

Art in the Landscape

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are cultural landscapes of local and national value. They are the product of people and place. They are an important element of our collective and individual identity and always represent much more than can be easily expressed.

We have a history of expressing the value of AONBs through the language of policy, by which the emotions of place are inadequately distilled into the tools of protection, but the reality is that we experience landscape; it triggers emotion. To describe landscape to others without invoking an experience is to fundamentally ignore our relationship with place and miss what it is to be human.

The beauty of these areas is often intangible and always vulnerable. Whether your spirits are lifted by a lone walk along a grassy hillside or refreshed by the intimacy of a woodland walk with a friend, their special qualities are experienced, felt, and ultimately understood. To recognise the experiential element of landscape and create opportunities for others to access the value this can bring to their lives is part, of their effective curation.

The arts are a central mechanism for helping this happen. The creative exploration of place, through music, painting, poetry, and dance opens up the experience of landscape beyond the world of science and policy and helps us better understand our place in the world. With better understanding comes better stewardship; the basis of a more sustainable future.

The NAAONB therefore, commits to a deeper exploration into the relationship between arts and landscape. We will actively promote the relationship between landscape and art and optimise our engagement with artists and producers in order to ensure our most precious landscapes are more accessible and more widely understood and appreciated by the nation.

Our commitment

- We will continue to explore opportunities with a wide range of partners, with an emphasis on activity and emotional engagement in nature and the great outdoors. Our emphasis will be on partnerships that can reach new audiences and enable those less engaged or harder to reach groups, to experience nature and wherever possible, to experience it first-hand, in the great outdoors.
- We will develop projects and programmes that serve to raise awareness, understanding, inspire and engage people in nature.
- In providing these opportunities, we aim to foster people's relationship with nature in a way that nurtures long-term behaviour supportive of our environment and nature; to grow understanding, awareness, appreciation and action.
- We aspire to helping create new ambassadors for the landscape, nature and natural beauty.