

New Young Rangers



New Young Rangers team building exercise

A NEW group of 15 young people from local schools have joined the fourth Mendip Hills AONB Young Ranger Programme.

The Young Rangers and their families attended a Welcome Evening and met the AONB staff and volunteers who deliver the programme. The Young Rangers had a game to get to know each other while their families took part in an AONB Challenge Quiz.

The first full activity day began with a morning of ice-breaking games and team building challenges. In the afternoon the Young Rangers enjoyed a ramble with a difference around Blackmoor – exploring the site in detail using their sight, smell and touch senses.

Advanced Young Rangers

14 of the Young Rangers from previous groups are now Advanced Young Rangers. This programme provides opportunities to learn more about landscape, wildlife and conservation work within the AONB with a greater focus on practical volunteering. For the first activity of their new programme the Advanced Young Rangers joined Chris Sperring, of the Hawk and Owl Trust, for a night time Owl Prowl.

Volunteer News

A new programme of practical tasks has been planned to the end of the year including access management, scrub management and dry stone walling.

We have appointed a new AONB Volunteer Project Assistant to work on site surveys, fixed post photography and other project related work.

In the fine autumn weather the AONB Volunteer Rangers have been busy undertaking regular site visits and offering information and advice to visitors. We now have only two vacancies remaining for Volunteer Rangers.

To find out more about volunteering with the AONB see our website.

National Grid – electricity power lines

THE Mendip Hills AONB Unit recently met with National Grid following the announcement of its preferred route for a power line from Hinkley Point passing through the Mendip Hills AONB. The route follows the existing Western Power overhead line which would be removed.

The AONB Unit awaits further details on technical and design matters for the route. For instance, placing cables underground is an option being considered by National Grid. However this would involve towers in the region of 50m high known as ‘sealing end compounds’ at either end of the underground sections which could be extremely intrusive within or near the AONB.

The Mendip Hills Unit will now be involved in a series of Thematic Groups to consider issues such as landscape, biodiversity, heritage, economic development and tourism impacts and scope of National Grid’s Environmental Impact Assessment. Also a Planning Performance Agreement involving National Grid, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council will enable matters such as mitigating impacts of the power line and financial contributions to benefit the AONB and local communities to be considered. The AONB Unit is seeking clarification from North Somerset Council on how it will engage in the process and support the AONB Unit in seeking to minimise impacts on the AONB.

The AONB Unit will be constantly reminding National Grid of its duty under the Electricity Act 1989 requiring the energy company to have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features and the ‘Holford Rules’ which will form the basis for assessing routes for overhead lines.

For further information see national Grid’s consultation website at www.nationalgrid.com/hinkleyconnection



View from Bleadon to Crook Peak

Dark skies

FOLLOWING the announcement that Exmoor National Park’s night sky is to be afforded international protective status, readers are reminded that the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee has a Position Statement on Dark Skies in the designated landscape. You can see this at the AONB Website: www.mendiphillsaonb/planning

The Mendip Hills AONB Unit is the voice of the protected landscape, working with landowners and the local community to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk
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