

A O N B V I S I T O R S A N D V O L U N T E E R S

Mendip Hills AONB signage

EVERY resident and visitor should know they are in an AONB and be able to find out more.

Recent closures of local Tourist Information Centres, and restricted public access to the AONB Unit (due to it being located in a residential centre), has led to a gap in outlets for visitor information.

This has knock-on effects for the community and the local economy. Building on the success of the new oak signage around Black Down and Burrington a series of visitor information points are being planned in partnership with site owners, parish and town councils.

The format will be adapted to the location – external panels, pop-up displays or posters. Common to all will be a map of the AONB incorporating all sites open to the public. Key visitor attractions and the very popular AONB Wild Walks routes will be marked on.



Each information panel will contain information relating to the specific site. Sites under discussion are: Burrington Combe, Axbridge lay-by, King Johns Hunting Lodge, Cheddar National Trust shop, Chew Valley Lake Visitor Centre, Wells and Mendip Museum, and Weston-super-Mare Museum.

In addition to this work the existing AONB boundary markers will be

refurbished and parishes and town councils will be offered the opportunity to: install village entry signs, incorporating the Mendip Hills AONB logo and 'Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' 'Please drive with care', and restore cast iron finger posts at road junctions to include the AONB logo

The AONB is identifying which parishes/town councils want their village signs and finger posts restored. The aim is to have the information points installed by December 2011 and begin installing the village signs by end of March 2012. Funding towards this work is available from the Sustainable Development Fund and AONB Partnership funding, but match funding will also be sought from participating parish and town councils.

Volunteer update



THERE has been a great response to the practical volunteer tasks run by Owen Jones the AONB Volunteer Coordinator shared with the Quantock Hills AONB. All the recent dry stone walling tasks were fully booked and some of those who took part are interested in joining a regular AONB task group. Since May, 151 volunteer hours have been given by 31 people on eight practical tasks.

In addition to those volunteering for practical tasks the AONB has Volunteer Rangers who undertake regular site visits, offering information and advice to visitors on-site and at events. One of the Rangers also provides a regular Ranger report on our web site. The numbers of Volunteer Rangers are limited to 20 to ensure the appropriate management, training and equipment can be provided by the AONB Project Officer. Seven of the current 18 have been with the AONB Unit since the late 1990s and together with more recent recruits they provide a valuable service to the area. The AONB Unit has held special evenings including a badger watch, owl prowling and astronomy sessions for the Rangers in recognition of their support.

The AONB Project Assistant volunteer role was created two years ago when a mature student from Bridgwater College (then Cannington College) came for 30 days work experience and stayed two years. The student was awarded a Somerset County Council staff award for his work with the AONB including assisting with site surveys, fixed post photography and other project related work. The post is ideal for a student studying land management or similar, or for someone looking to change careers who needs work experience. The AONB has just been recruiting for this post.

For current Volunteer vacancies see our web site.

CONGRATULATIONS to Andrew and Jen of Fernhill Farm for winning the Somerset FWAG Otter Trophy 2011 for their sustainable management of the farm. AONB Sustainable Development Fund grants assisted funding of their innovative renewable energy and waste systems. The farm was also the venue for the International Junior Ranger Camp in 2010. See page 10.

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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