



Photo: Raise your voices for the Wye Valley River Festival. Photo: Will Datson



Dive in to river festival now!

Jump right in and join the fun by helping to get ready for this year's Wye Valley River Festival, a watery festival with the "wow" factor which takes place from April 29 to May 15.

From its exciting launch in Hereford to the grand finale at Chepstow Racecourse, the festival will bring a series of innovative, intriguing and spectacular events to different locations along a 60-mile stretch of the river. There's amazing energy going into the planning and preparation for this unique festival and now's the time to get those creative juices flowing and be a part of it.

On Saturday February 13 in the Courtroom at Shire Hall Monmouth (2pm-4pm) and on Sunday February 14 at Llandogo Village Hall (2pm-4pm) get in tune for the festival with Elle Holliday, who already runs dynamic choirs in Gloucestershire and the Forest of Dean. The sessions are for everyone who wants to sing and be part of the festival performances and the finale on May 15 and they are open to all ages and abilities, from age 16. Participants can just turn up – there's no need to book, but sessions will start on time.

"Singing opportunities will continue in the lead-up to the festival, with talented choir leaders and singers leading enjoyable and fun events, singing songs about water, rivers, rain, tears, and tea! We will look at all kinds of different songs, so whatever kind of music people like, there'll be something they love." said Sarah Sawyer, Community Links Officer with the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). She added: "These sessions are for everyone. If you like to sing, or if you think you can't sing, if you have never sung, if you used to sing but haven't for ages - this is for you!"

The Wye Valley River Festival is a biennial event inspired by the landscape and led by the Wye Valley AONB unit and arts professionals collaborating with local communities. As the programme develops between now and the start of the festival, there will be lots more opportunities to join in free events to make flags, banners and bunting; tell stories, invent new stories and explore myths and legends; make up new routes across the landscape and more. "It's a chance to join an adventure into creativity and to get involved in the activities of this amazing festival and be a part of the extraordinary performances and events," said Sarah. "Watch out for news of sessions on walking and storytelling – and how to do both at the same time! We'll be exploring hidden places, secret stories, history, culture and magic throughout the Wye Valley, from the deepest glades in the Forest of Dean to the wide open reaches of the fields and meadows of Ross on Wye. Also look out for exciting sessions on making things. Schools and communities will also be making hundreds of flags and banners and miles of bunting - we need everyone to join in the fun!"

If you're interested in taking part in any of these creative days or you want to get involved in any way please contact Sarah Sawyer, email: community@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk or call 01600 710844 to register interest and be put on the mailing list.

Visit the website www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk for more information about the Wye Valley River Festival; follow on Twitter: @wyebeauty #wyevalleyriverfestival or like us on facebook: www.facebook.com/wyevalleyriverfestival.

The Wye Valley River Festival 2016 is a Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership initiative with funding from the Sustainable Development Fund, a Welsh Government Initiative in the Wye Valley AONB, The Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales, supported by the Welsh Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery, Environment Agency, Ernest Cook Trust, Forestry Commission England, New Grove Trust, Hereford River Carnival, Ross Town Council and in-kind support from The Shire Hall, Monmouth, numerous volunteers & local communities; main business sponsor Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire and media sponsors Sunshine Radio and Live 24-Seven. For a full list of sponsors see www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk.

To find out more about the festival's artistic directors Desperate Men visit: www.desperatemen.com.

For further information about the Wye Valley River Festival 2016 please contact: Andrew Blake, Wye Valley AONB Officer, 01600 713977 email: aonb.officer@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

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