

Riverside work helps conserve wildlife and landscape!



The partnership between Ross-on-Wye Town Council, Natural England and the Wye Valley AONB Unit has continued to manage the riverside in Ross to encourage biodiversity and improve riverside views. A programme of tree management to help create better habitats for a variety of flora and fauna along the river involves pollarding and coppicing trees. This helps to improve the age structure of riverside trees and provide a good habitat for a variety of species. This also creates views of the river, and light and shade on the river and along the river bank. Shade helps to maintain beneficially high oxygen levels in the water, whilst adequate light means the growth of aquatic plants is not inhibited.

Coppicing is when trees are cut down at their base to encourage growth of new stems. It creates a sustainable timber supply for future generations. Some of the Alder trees along the river bank in Ross show signs of the disease Phytophthora and, if left unmanaged, these trees would die. Coppiced trees are less likely to be affected by the disease when the regrowth starts in the spring.

It is hoped that some of the Willow trees will be 'pleached'. The tree is 'hinged' at its base and laid along the river bank. This is an innovative form of riverbank management. The tree will continue to grow, and the vegetation in the water will create habitat for aquatic animals. The branches will slow down the flow of water, creating 'slack' water. This slower flowing water will provide habitat for fish to shelter in.

Pollarding and coppicing have been undertaken on the flood plains of the River Wye for many centuries, particularly at Ross. The town had a thriving basket making industry, which relied on the new growth of the coppiced willow trees lining the river. A blue plaque on the Hope and Anchor pub remembers this part of the town's history.

Further work of pollarding and coppicing will continue in March with some additional work to help prevent erosion along Long Acre. This will involve willow spiling, a means by which two fishing platforms are created using live willow woven in tiers to retain them.

The River Wye is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) because it is an important migration route, wildlife corridor and breeding area for many nationally and internationally important species.

Further information from:
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Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan



Where are we at?

Since the last newsletter update we had a very useful "show, tell and consult" session at the Carnival, with a good number of people looking at the policies and projects in the draft Plan. Some of the detailed feedback enabled significant progress on one of the trickier sites.

The open Steering Committee recognises that the long gestation period of the Plan is frustrating and, to make progress, has sought alternatives to site allocations for housing, employment and infrastructure facilities. We have therefore been asked by town councillors to use two approaches: robust site allocation where information is readily available; and the less robust 'criteria based' approach for areas where information remains lacking.

This could still mean that, within the term of the Plan, inappropriate speculative developments are unavoidable simply in order to meet the government's 5-year housing land supply requirements; but we are seeking to mitigate this by prioritising sites based on additional criteria.

Herefordshire Council policy on the replacement school proposals remains unresolved so we have been advised also to pursue a 'criteria based' site selection policy for a school site (a model used elsewhere in the county). Herefordshire Council have already largely agreed with the Economic Development department for our criteria based policies for the area under strategic review on the east side of the A40 (relief road).

If, during the Regulation 14 consultation phase, new information emerges that enables criteria based policies to be converted to allocations, that may be both desirable and feasible.

Our current timeline for completion of the Plan looks like:

Spring 2018	Public Consultation (Regulation 14),
Summer 2018	Resolve issues from consultation
Winter 2018/2019 examination,	Submit for (Regulation 16) and Referendum

Melvin Reynolds, Chair of Steering Group - Jan 2018

The Mayor's Ball

The Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor Nigel and Mrs. Gill Gibbs are delighted to invite you to join them at the Mayor's Ball on Saturday 24th March 2018, 7.00pm for 7.30pm at the Chase Hotel. There will be a three course meal with choices of menu (please ring the Town Council office for details), followed by a disco. Tickets are £35 pp, available from the office and all profits will go to the Mayor's charity, the Midlands Air Ambulance.