

1. Suggestion to speed up the AONB Boundary Review Process

The chairmen of the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs recently wrote to the Defra minister responsible for AONBs with a suggestion on how the process for AONB boundary reviews could be speeded up. This follows the desire for a boundary review in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB instigated nearly 20 years ago and an aspiration in the Dedham Vale AONB for a boundary review in 2009. The suggestion supports the aspirations of local people, businesses and AONB Partnerships for boundary reviews while reducing the burden on Natural England staff and resources. The proposal does not diminish the requirement of the Secretary of State to take decisions, nor Natural England to provide statutory advice and support, rather it means that local AONB Partnerships can develop work for boundary review aspirations that Natural England can assess and make recommendations on.

The discussion document can be viewed at: <http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/assets/Boundary-Extension/Discussion-paper-on-speeding-up-landscape-designation-process.pdf>

2. XXXXX 35 Surveys; 603 Volunteers; 167 Balloons; 20,515 items of litter; 79% plastic XXXXXThe 2016 Suffolk Beachwatch results are in and its good and bad.....

The results indicate the extent of the challenge but also the fantastic efforts made by volunteers to help tackle the problem. Help make the beaches even cleaner and improve the understanding of where the litter is coming from by taking part in the Great British Beach Clean 2017. All the info on the Marine Conservation Society website at <http://www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch/greatbritishbeachclean>

3. AONB Volunteers. They are fantastic. This month alone we have recorded:

- i. Stour Valley Volunteers building a tree nursery and cutting and raking important grassland sites
- ii. Supported AONB staff at two nature days
- iii. A team of Suffolk County Council interns undertaking tranquillity surveys
- iv. Installed new and updated signage on Stour and Orwell Walk (as well as Suffolk Coast Path)
- v. Alex Churcher as a work placement with the AONB team

The AONB team are indebted to all our volunteers and those that work for other organisations to make the AONBs and their project areas such fantastic places.

4. Grant bid submitted

The River Stour Project has submitted a grant application for a project to improve the environmental conditions of the River Stour to the Branch Out fund run by Essex and Suffolk Water. The project is to create a backwater that would greatly benefit wildlife (fish, wildfowl and plants) as well as create an attractive visual feature within the Dedham Vale AONB.

5. Assessing Natural Beauty?

Human experts may be a thing of the past. Researchers at the University of Warwick have trained an algorithm to rate scenic images from one to 10. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/technology-40805739/algorithm-learns-to-understand-natural-beauty>

6. Quick Bits:

- **East Anglia THREE offshore wind farm:** The Secretary of State has granted development consent for this application. Info at <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/east-anglia-three-offshore-wind-farm/>
- **Local businesses and charities in Felixstowe** have enabled those affected by the tragic events at Grenfell Tower to enjoy some time on the Suffolk Coast. This gesture was supported by delegates to the Stour and Orwell Forum who donated £150.
- **Sizewell C:** Project Update: Following the completion of the Stage 2 Consultation on the Sizewell C proposals, EDF Energy is aiming to provide feedback and an update to the community in the Autumn 2017 once the company has completed the analysis of responses. The responses number over 1,000.
- **Am I in the AONB?** The AONB team frequently get asked this. Google maps provide an AONB boundary but we suggest for legal matters contact the AONB team for a copy of the designation map.
- **Railway crossings.** The AONB team has been discussing with Network Rail proposed changes to railway crossings. Our attention was drawn to a recent case in Dorset where residents were upset with proposals-see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-40824407>

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