



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig
 Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
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Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and 2020



What are the projects aims?

The overall aim of the River Festival is to get more people to appreciate, visit, enjoy and value the protected landscape of the Wye Valley. The Festival has been the most effective way we engage with visitors. In 2020 we had to modify these aims, reflecting the need to deliver a digital festival with the aims of:

- Retaining the love that people have for the Festival and the Wye Valley, raising their spirits, elevating their mood and making them feel happy
- Raising awareness of the digital River Festival and growing new online audiences, getting sign up/ registration for online events
- Facilitating a conversation about protected landscapes and

- the Wye Valley AONB
- Showcasing the Wye Valley AONB as an inspirational place with a rich artistic, creative tradition that is alive and well today
- Provoking interest in the Wye Valley as a place to visit in the future

How were these aims achieved?

We didn't put people on seats to watch Shakespeare, we created something edgy and unexpected that related directly to the protected landscape. We created a quirky, unpretentious arts festival, shaped by the landscape and inspired by nature, rooted in our communities and with a strong social purpose. For example, bringing the Museum of the Moon to Wales to Tintern Abbey, creating a visual spectacle in a breath-taking

location.

In 2020 we had to change our delivery from a physical festival in the landscape to a digital festival that people could only access online. We had to find a new digital delivery platform and reprogramme events which could be delivered through this medium. So our aims were achieved by growing our social channels and online engagement. We also created content that would have a legacy - video and photography which could be used long after the digital festival finished, that would help in recovery activity post lockdowns. Here is a selection of videos created as part of the Wye Valley River Festival project:

- [The Wye Tour promo](#)
- [Inspired by the Wye](#)
- [Exploring Wye Valley national landscape](#)

- [River Festival 2020 Promo](#)
- [Exploring the Wye by bike](#)
- [Exploring the Wye Valley on foot and afloat](#)

Who was involved?

The AONB River Festival Team, The Artistic Team (Desperate Men and Phil Haynes), our partners - Forestry Commission, Cadw, ACW, ACE, Gwent Wildlife Trust, volunteers, Monmouth Town Council, Tintern Community Council, local school children etc.

How was the project funded?

AONB core funding, grants from Arts Council Wales/ England, Forestry Commission, Cadw (+ in kind support).

Where did you go for help and advice?

Other festivals and arts organisations, Visit Wales, specialist suppliers.

What has been the greatest achievement so far?

The 2018 Festival was our third and most successful, with 32,500 visitors to 30 events at 25 venues. The highlight was international artist Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon at Tintern Abbey. We were the first to programme the Moon in Wales (it has since gone worldwide). We commissioned a drone video showing how the Moon was installed, featuring a stirring

[soundtrack of the NASA moon landing](#), which led to a sell out event.

It also featured in a 6 minute segment on S4C and was 'picture of the day' in The Guardian, Daily Telegraph and Times.

In 2020 the greatest achievement was just to have a festival happen at all, when all around events were cancelled. This achievement included being able to keep artists working which was vitally important to them – and to bring some light-hearted entertainment to our audiences.

And the biggest challenge?

Cancelling a physical festival 8 weeks before the event and then deciding to delivering a digital festival in September 2020.

Any tips for those setting up a similar project?

Be clear on why you want to do it. Talk to people who have been there! Double the budget and the time you think it will take to do...

What's next for your project?

Once the Festival was established the long term aim was always to hand it over to a standalone organisation to take forward. To this end a new Community Interest Company was established in 2021 and the AONB has now passed the management and delivery of future festivals to the CIC. The

Festival will (hopefully) run 27 May – 5 June 2022.

