

CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held in the Council Chamber, County hall, Ruthin on Friday, 26 February 2016 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Derek Butler (FCC), Hugh Jones (Chair) (WCBC) and Huw Jones (DCC).

ALSO PRESENT

Deputy Monitoring Officer/Solicitor (DCC - LJ), Head of Flintshire Countryside Services (FCC - TW), Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer (DCC - HS), Countryside and Heritage Services Manager (DCC – HR), Senior Countryside Officer AONB (DCC - DS), Senior Management Accountant (DCC - GW), Senior Finance and Assurance Officer (DCC – PO'H) Senior Recreation Officer (DCC - HM) and Committee Administrator (DCC – CIW).

1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bernie Attridge (FCC), Hugh Evans (DCC), Ian Roberts (WCBC) and Paul Mitchell and Carol Rothwell (NRW).

No Members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

2 MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 26 JUNE, 2015

The Minutes of a meeting of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on the 26th June, 2015 were submitted.

Accuracy:-

Also Present:- It was noted that Tom Woodall was employed by Flintshire County Council and not Wrexham County Borough Council. It was also suggested that Martin Howarth be listed before David Shiel in the list of officers present.

5. Draft Constitution and Terms of Reference for the AONB Partnership:- The Chair request that it be clarified that the view had been expressed that it was “unfair” that Local Authority Elected Members should have substitutions whilst other groups could not.

The Chair referred to the final sentence of the third paragraph on Page 11 “Furthermore, any delegation of executive functions will not prevent the Authority itself ceasing to be responsible for those functions, that this will always be retained” and made reference to the need for clarification. The Deputy Monitoring Officer/Solicitor explained that it was the Authorities themselves ceasing to be responsible for the functions in question. In the event of the Authority requesting another Authority to carry out an executive function on its behalf, it would still retain the overall responsibility for the undertaking of that specific function. Details of the delegation of executive functions by the Authority were summarised by the DMO/S.

It was also noted that reference to a “Planning Application”, in the fourth paragraph on Page 11, be amended to read a “Planning Committee”.

RESOLVED – *that, subject to the above, the minutes be received and approved as a correct record.*

3 MINUTES OF THE AONB PARTNERSHIP HELD 16 OCTOBER, 2015

The Minutes of the AONB Partnership held on the 16th October, 2015 were submitted.

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer (CRDVO) highlighted the main points within the minutes which included:-

- The value of the AONB Badge Scheme Show Case which had engaged local businesses, and the benefits of the courses were outlined.
- The AONB Framework and Terms of Reference. It had been agreed that the term of office for the Chair of the Partnerships be for one year, and substitute members be accepted for all categories.
- Appointments of Members to Partnership Working Groups was considered and agreed. Details of the five Working Groups had been provided.
- The Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB now had 120 members. The Committee agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to the Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB acknowledging the work they had undertaken. They also endorsed the suggestion that they be invited to provide a presentation to a future meeting of the Joint Committee, outlining the work they had undertaken.
- Details of site visits undertaken was provided, and the importance of maintaining the partnership was highlighted. The Chair referred to the value and benefits of increasing awareness. The CRDVO provided details of forthcoming site visits which included a visit to Aberduna Quarry, Mold.

RESOLVED – *that the minutes be received.*

4 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of the updated forward work programme had been circulated previously.

Members of the JC considered the Forward Work Programme and the following salient points were highlighted:-

- The Public Consultation on the AONB Management Plan had been completed, and the document had been circulated.
- Work had been undertaken in respect of the Outreach and Volunteer Strategy.
- The AONB Partnership had been established and the Terms of Reference would be considered by the Joint Committee.
- The SDF Panel had been appointed, and details of the memberships were provided.
- The Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB now had 120 members.
- Details of the work undertaken on Facebook were provided in relation to the Clwydian Range 30th Anniversary.
- Staff were attending Tourism and RDP meetings in relation to the AONB Tourism Strategy.
- The implementation and promotion of new literature had been undertaken in relation to the Climate Change Programme.

In response to a question from the Chair, the CRDVO explained that work had not yet commenced in respect of the Urbanisation Project, which entailed entering into an agreement with NEWTRA and the Local Authority Highways to respect the rural nature of the AONB.

RESOLVED – *that the report be received and its contents noted.*

5 DETERMINED AONB PLANNING APPLICATIONS

A Summary of AONB Planning Consultations for the period from April, 2015 to September, 2015 had been circulated previously for information purposes.

The JC considered the summary of AONB Planning Consultations circulated.

Reference was made by the Chair to instances in reports where concerns had been expressed and alternatives had been suggested. He felt that it would be advantageous if an indication could be provided as to whether such recommendations had been accepted. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer (CRDVO) suggested this could be achieved by utilising a colour coding process. The Committee supported the suggestion that Planning Applications submitted over a period of several years, in respect of the ANOB and the World Heritage Site, be examined to ascertain if they had been accepted.

The Chair suggested that the opportunity could be taken to recommend that Section 106 funding might be utilised by some of the projects.

The CRDVO explained that 103 Applications had been received. The Chair thanked the Clwydian Range AONB Planning Officer for the work undertaken in respect of the Applications received.

RESOLVED – *that the report be received and the comments made be noted and actioned.*

6 OUR PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE PRESENTATION

The Senior Recreation Officer (DCC) (SRO) explained that the “Our Picturesque Landscape” would be one of the main focus of work for the AONB Team over the next seven years. It was explained that this had been the second Application made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which included a different area to the first Application.

The Heritage Lottery Fund had requested that a specific area be identified and the second Application was supported. It was explained that the Picturesque Project had been based on the inspirational landscape of the River Dee Valley and its Historic Routeways.

The Joint Committee received a presentation, “Our Picturesque Landscape”, from the Senior Recreation Officer (DCC) which included information pertaining to “Our Picturesque”:-

- Past Journeys.
- Heritage Value.
- Project Need.
- Project Partners.
- What we would like to do.
- Engaging Communities.
- Accessing the Picturesque.
- Conserving the Picturesque.

A copy of the presentation was circulated at the meeting. It was also agreed that an electronic version of the presentation be circulated to Members of the Committee, together with, a copy of the short summary of the project which would be distributed with the job description.

The SRO responded to a question from the Chair and confirmed that a route map or forward work programme would be available in approximately fourteen months’ time. She explained the interview for a Project Manager would be in April, 2016.

Members were informed that the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB would be the lead partner for the project, with shared responsibility, which would be monitored by the HLF. Members were assured that there would be regular update reports presented to the Joint Committee.

The impact of the project on North East Wales, in terms of outreach and project links, was provided by the SRO. Councillor D. Butler highlighted the importance of establishing links with the local community and developing a Rural Areas Rides Map.

The CRDVO referred to the high standard and variation of public transport links available in the area, particular reference being made to the local bus services and water taxi. The SRO explained that the Project had emanated from areas identified in the management of the World Heritage Plan and AONB Management Plan, which from which the public had expressed a preference for short walks. It was

emphasised that it would be important to build and develop on information received from the local communities which had been received through public consultations.

RESOLVED – *that Joint Committee receive and note the contents of the report.*

7 JOINT COMMITTEE BUDGET

A report by the Senior Management Accountant (DCC) (SMA), which provided details of the AONB's revenue budget monitoring position for 2015/16, as well as the proposed budget for 2016/17, had been circulated previously.

The SMA, assisted by the Senior Finance and Assurance Officer (DCC), introduced the report which provided a summary of the AONB's revenue budget for 2015/16, as detailed in Appendix 1. The AONB's gross expenditure budget was £420K, with the position being a forecast overspend of £3k. The report also provided a summary of the proposed revenue budget for 2016/17, Appendix 2, which proposed a gross expenditure budget of £440K.

The budget had been presented in 2 parts; Core and Area. The Core budget related to those functions which were the current minimum amount required to operate the AONB activities during the current year. It was explained that the budget may vary from year to year depending on external and internal funding. The Area budget related to expenditure to deliver projects in the various LA areas of the AONB. The budget could include non-core staff working on particular projects in the AONB during the year. This budget would vary from year to year and even within year depending on project progress and funding sources.

In reply to a question from the Chair, it was explained that the uplift from Wrexham County Borough Council had been included in the reserves.

Members were informed that National Insurance and Pension figures had been incorporated in the figures in Appendix 2. However, an allowance for a pay award had not been included. It was confirmed that this could be in the region of 1%. The Committee were informed that an allowance had been incorporated for the possible inclusion of a Community Partnership post.

Councillor H.LI. Jones referred to the budget of £1.5k for uniforms for 2016/17, which had been included in Appendix 2. The CRDVO provided details of the budget allocation in relation to the number of staff. The CRDVO informed the Committee that there had been an increase of £1.4k in respect of the subscriptions to the National Association of AONBs

Details of potential risks and the consultation process undertaken had been incorporated in the report. It was confirmed that any changes to the income levels could pose a risk to the future delivery of projects and the ability to deliver against the priorities in the AONB Management Plan.

RESOLVED – *that the Joint Committee:-*

- (a) notes the progress against the agreed budget strategy this financial year, as in Appendix 1, and
- (b) approves the proposed budget for 2016/17.

8 POTENTIAL NRW COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP POST

A report by the Senior Countryside Officer (DCC) (SCO), on the potential to establish a Community Partnership Post for the Southern part of the AONB in partnership with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), had been circulated previously.

The Joint Committee were informed by the SCO that a decision had been sought on making resources available to match fund a Joint NRW - AONB Post. The Clwydian Range AONB had been extended to incorporate the Dee Valley in 2011, and since 2011 there had been no additional staffing resource to help develop links with the respective communities to meet the potential to develop project work. It was therefore more difficult for these communities to access the benefits that being part of the AONB could bring.

The AONB currently had a partnership arrangement with the operational teams of NRW in the central part of the Clwydian Range around the NRW Forest Estate at Moel Famau, Nercwys and Llangwyfan. The partnership jointly funded the Community Warden Post since 2002 and had been successful in developing a number of community projects around biodiversity, young people and schools, skills and access improvements and had out reached to communities in both Flintshire and Denbighshire.

The potential to extend the partnership into the Dee Valley for a 2 year period, and to create another Partnership Warden Post to work specifically with the communities of the new parts of the AONB, was highlighted. NRW had allocated resources to part fund a post and were keen to expand the partnership to the southern area of the AONB. The Post would allow the AONB to develop project work with the communities in the new part of the AONB with particular outputs including:-

- The development of Young Rangers for the Dee Valley
- Volunteer opportunities
- Training in traditional skills
- Community wildlife conservation projects.
- School Projects
- Access improvements - circular walks

The cost of the Warden post would be an NRW Contribution of £12,000 pa for two years, with £12,000 pa for two years being sought from the AONB. Details of the purpose and outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken had been included in the report.

Councillor D. Butler felt that it had been proactive step to promote the post and expressed his support for the appointment.

In response to a question from the Chair, the officers confirmed that sufficient resources had been allocated to support the undertaking of the related work.

RESOLVED – *that the Joint Committee make resources available to match fund NRW's contribution to a Partnership Post.*

9 AONB PARTNERSHIP'S FRAMEWORK AND TERMS OF REFERENCE UPDATING AND DOVETAILING WITH JOINT COMMITTEE'S LEGAL AGREEMENT REPORT

A report by the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer (DCC) (CRDVO) had been circulated previously.

The CRDVO explained that the new document had been reviewed again by the AONB Officers Working Group (OWG) on the 10th September, 2015. The AONB Partnership had been consulted on the 16th September, 2015, and the Joint Committee re-consulted on the 22nd September, 2015. The revised Constitution and Terms of Reference had been included as Appendix 1 to the report.

The AONB Officer explained that Members of the Partnership were key partners in delivering the Management Plan, and the revised document would contribute towards effective governance. The Joint Committee were informed that there was a zero cost, other than officer time, and a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision had been included as Appendix 2 to the report.

In reply to a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that there would be a requirement to comply with the Welsh Language Standards and the Solicitor (DCC) confirmed this could be included in the document.

The CRDVO made specific reference to the following Points within Appendix 2:-

- Point 5 – The sentence “This Joint Committee is not an external body”. The Solicitor (DCC) emphasised that the Joint Committee and the AONB Partnership was not an external body but was a Joint Committee of the three respective Authorities. The CRDVO invited Members attention to Appendix 2, the Diagram of the AONB Structure.
- Point 16 – It had been agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership be elected by the full AONB Partnership for a period of 1 year. In reply to a question from Councillor D. Butler, the CRDVO confirmed that it had been agreed that any Member of the Partnership could be appointed as Chair or Vice Chair.
- Point 26 – Be amended to read that “The AONB Officer and NRW Officer had the delegated authority to decide grant applications up to £3000”.

During the ensuing discussion the Chair and Members of the Committee thanked the officers for the work undertaken.

RESOLVED – that the Joint Committee endorses the Framework and Terms of Reference for the AONB Partnership.

10 AONB PLANNING SCHEME OF DELEGATION REPORT

A report by the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer (DCC) (CRDVO), which enabled the Joint Committee to respond in a timely, effective and efficient manner to planning consultations, from the constituent Authorities, had been circulated previously.

The CRDVO explained that one of the functions of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB (JC) was to respond to planning and development consultations referred to the AONB for comment. Most consultations related to proposals within the AONB, but also include those outside the designated area which were within the setting of the protected landscape and may impact on the AONB.

A summary of the purpose of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Joint Scheme of Delegation for Planning and Development Consultations (SDPDC), Appendix 1 to the report, was provided by the CRDVO.

Members were informed that the SDPDC set a framework for the AONB to increase the number of Planning Consultations to which it contributed. It was confirmed that there was a zero cost, other than officer time, and that the AONB Officer had consulted with Denbighshire's Legal department to check that AONB Officers were meeting and following the correct legal procedures.

The AONB Planning Officer currently received over 150 applications each year, an increase of 50% since the AONB was extended to the Dee Valley. However, the AONB Planning Officer still only worked 2 days per week unless additional delegation could not be responded to in a timely manner to some planning and development proposals.

During the ensuing discussion the Chair thanked the officers for the work undertaken in respect of the Applications received.

RESOLVED – that the Joint Committee adopt the Scheme of Delegation for Planning and Development Consultations as in Appendix 1 to the report.

11 MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION REPORT

A report by the Senior Countryside Officer (DCC) (SCO), on the consultation on the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Management Plan, had been circulated previously.

The Joint Committee (JC) were informed by the SCO that a decision was required to formally adopt the AONB Management Plan. The consultation period for the AONB Management had closed in August, 2015, and the Management Plan had been amended where appropriate in line with responses received. The Consultation Report had been included with the agenda.

The SCO explained that Local Authorities had a statutory Duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to produce a Management Plan and to review it every 5 years. The Plan set out an agenda for the management of the AONB in line with identified Special Qualities and Features, and was made up of the Management Strategy, State of AONB Report and 5 Year Action Plan.

It was explained that the Draft Plan had been considered by the AONB Partnership at its meeting on the 15th May, 2015. Confirmation was provided that resources had been identified to publish the Plan within the overall budget, and expenditure would be monitored with any variances being reported through the budget monitoring process. There was a reputational risk to the AONB and the Local Authorities with a failure to publish the Statutory Management Plan, as funding from NRW and Welsh Government could be withdrawn.

Councillor D. Butler commended the report and the work undertaken, and he expressed the opinion that the colouring and photographs utilised had provided a flavour for the area.

Following further discussion, it was:-

RESOLVED – *that the Joint Committee formally adopts the AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019.*

12 ASPIRATIONS OF THE CEIRIOG VALLEY TO BE INCLUDED IN THE AONB

The Chair explained that he had received correspondence from various organisations in the Ceiriog Valley, including Community Councils, requesting the support of the Joint Committee for the inclusion of the Ceiriog Valley in the AONB.

He explained that the correspondence received requested that the views of Members be sought on the possibility of the Committee, as a statutory Joint Committee, presenting a report to the appropriate body making recommendations for the inclusion of the Ceiriog Valley in the AONB. Councillors H.Ll. Jones and D. Butler expressed the view that this would be a resources issue.

The CRDVO explained that it would be within the remit of Natural Resources Wales to make such recommendations, and Welsh Government to provide approval of the recommendations. He referred to the extensive area involved and the views which could be expressed by other interested parties, such as Powys County Council and the farming communities, and level of support which could be attained.

It was explained by the CRDVO that the principle in this case would need to emanate from Welsh Government, who were currently reviewing protected landscapes. He felt that in principle support could be offered by the Joint Committee if Members so wished, and he suggested that the matter could be pursued by seeking the support of the respective Assembly Members and Welsh Government Ministers.

During the ensuing discussion it was agreed that responses be sent, in reply to the correspondence received, explaining that the request had been discussed and the

merits of the case understood. However, concerns had been expressed by the Committee that the issue had been resource based. Members had also noted that Welsh Government were currently undertaking a review of designated landscapes, and that the appropriate contact could be through Assembly Members or Welsh Government Ministers. The CRDVO confirmed that officers would be happy to liaise and work with the Chirk and Ceiriog Valley Partnership.

RESOLVED – *that the Joint Committee agreed that:-*

- (a) the report be received and the position noted.*
- (b) responses be sent, as agreed by the Committee, in reply to the correspondence received, and*
- (c) officers liaise and work with Chirk and Ceiriog Valley Partnership.*

13 FUTURE MEETING DATES

The following dates were considered for future meetings of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee (JC):-

17th or 24th June, 2016
18th or 25th November, 2016

The Committee agreed that the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer liaise with the Members of the JC and agree suitable dates.

The DMO/S informed Members that the next meeting of the JC would be the Annual meeting, and the agenda would include a business item pertaining to the Appointment of a Chair of the JC for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED – *that:-*

- (a) the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer liaise with the Members of the Committee and agree suitable dates for future meetings of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee, and*
- (b) the agenda for the June, 2016 meeting include a business item pertaining to the Appointment of a Chair of the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.*

Meeting ended at 11.10 a.m.