

## **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 COUNTY HALL, MOLD, FLINTSHIRE on Friday, 8 March 2019 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Chair: Councillor Tony Thomas (Denbighshire County Council)  
Councillor Billy Mullin on behalf of Derek Butler and Carolyn Thomas (Flintshire County Council)

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer), David Shiel (Assistant AONB Officer), Michael Skuse (AONB Partnership and Friends of AONB), Paul Mitchell (Natural Resources Wales), Paula O'Hanlon (Senior Finance Officer, DCC), Huw Rees (Head of Countryside & Heritage Services DCC), Gareth O Williams (Finance Manager, DCC), Gary Williams (Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services, DCC), Anna Irwin (Senior Conservation & Environment Officer, WCBC), Martin Howarth (Rights of Way, WCBC), Kate Thomson (Our Picturesque Landscape Partnership Officer) and Sharon Thomas (Democratic Services Officer, FCC)

## **1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Apologies were received from Councillors: Hugh Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council), Bobby Feeley (Denbighshire County Council), Derek Butler and Carolyn Thomas (Flintshire County Council) and Mr. Tom Woodall (Flintshire County Council)

There were no declarations of interest.

## **2 MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING**

The minutes of the Joint Committee held on 23 November 2018 were submitted.

### Accuracy

Item 7 - It was clarified that appointments had not yet been made to the Grazing Animals Sustainable Management Scheme.

### Matters Arising

Item 3 - On the Dark Sky initiative, it was reported that a Dark Sky Officer (Dani Robertson) had been appointed through the partnership with Snowdonia National Park, Anglesey AONB and Llŷn AONB. The role was to co-ordinate events and

engage with businesses, in addition to progressing a potential single Dark Sky designation across protected areas of North Wales.

Item 3 - A report to consider lessons learned from the Llantysilio Mountain fire would be received at the special meeting of Denbighshire County Council's Communities Scrutiny Committee on 20 March 2019 at Llangollen Pavilion. DCC's Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services (GW) provided details of the format for the full-day meeting which would be open to the public.

Whilst this fire had taken place outside the permitted burning season (October to March in Wales), the AONB team had also engaged with the Fire Service in relation to recent fires at Glyndyfrdwy and Velvet hill at Valle Crucis.

Item 7 - The Assistant AONB Officer (DS) provided clarification on some of the sites across North East Wales which were due to benefit from the Grazing Animals Sustainable Management Scheme. He said that a more detailed update on progress with the scheme could be shared at a future meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

**That subject to the amendment, the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held on 23 November 2018 be approved as a correct record.**

**3 DRAFT MINUTES OF OUR PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP**

The draft minutes of the January meeting of the Our Picturesque Landscape Project Steering Group were received.

In response to a question from Councillor David Kelly, the Assistant AONB Officer (DS) provided clarification on the membership of the Steering Group.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the Steering Group meeting held on 16 January 2019 be received.**

**4 JOINT COMMITTEE BUDGET**

DCC's Finance Manager (GOW) introduced the report on the anticipated position of the Joint Committee's revenue budget outturn for 2018/19. Additional information omitted from the published report was circulated.

The budget continued to be well managed with a small underspend projected for year end. This was mainly due to a vacant position which was now filled. The news that all three Authorities had committed to the same level of funding for 2019/20 was welcomed by the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the latest forecast financial outturn for 2018/19 be noted along with progress against the agreed budget.**

## **5 LEGAL AGREEMENT REPORT**

DCC's Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services (GW) presented a report to consider the Legal Agreement for the Joint Committee which set out the purpose, Terms of Reference and key arrangements between the three Authorities. The Agreement was due to be reviewed, amended or adopted prior to its 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary at the end of March 2019.

The AONB Officer (HS) suggested that he and the legal officers update the document to reflect some minor changes, and bring back to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services and AONB Officer update the Joint Committee Legal Agreement and submit the final version to the next meeting to be adopted for the next five years.**

## **6 JOINT WORKING WITH WHS BOARD - JOINT STATEMENT OF INTENT AND POTENTIAL SUMMER FIELD VISIT**

The AONB Officer (HS) proposed that a meeting be arranged between the Chairs of the Joint Committee and the World Heritage Site Board to agree a joint statement of intent to reflect the working relationship.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the AONB Officer arrange a meeting between the Chair of the Joint Committee and Chair of the WHS Board.**

## **7 CROW ACT 2000 SECTION 85 ORGANISATION UPDATE**

The AONB Officer (HS) reported on a positive meeting with Welsh Water to agree a landscaping scheme for water treatment works below the aqueduct in Trevor which now required him to engage with Natural Resources Wales.

During an update on undergrounding electricity lines by Scottish Power Energy Networks, it was noted that a number of new areas were being considered including Minera. The National Grid line from Legacy to Nercwys, just outside the AONB boundary, was currently awaiting approval.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the update be noted.**

## **8 GENERIC AONB OPORTUNITIES WITHIN LOCAL AUTHORITIES LETTER / MEETING**

The AONB Officer (HS) gave examples of signage issues across the area which could have benefitted from consultation with the Joint Committee. He suggested that the role of the Joint Committee could be highlighted by the Chair writing to Local Authorities or by a meeting between Members and officers to share knowledge on specific topics, as demonstrated on the Dark Skies project.

The Chair agreed that both actions should be undertaken.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the AONB Officer arrange for a letter to be sent from the Chair to Local Authorities and meetings between Lead Members and officers as appropriate.**

**9 UPDATE OUR PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE**

Kate Thomson, the Heritage Lottery Fund Our Picturesque Landscape Partnership Officer, gave a presentation on progress with the five year project which was centred on the Dee Valley. The key points were:

- Kate was one of three officers in the team based at Plas Newydd.
- The work programme comprised projects for each of the five years, with some brought forward as funding became available.
- Information was shared on conservation work involving the use of volunteers and Countryside teams to improve views and access whilst achieving environmental benefits.
- Engagement with community groups to plant trees and improve the woodland with future focus on managing the woodland plan.
- Working with local people through the 'Connecting people with Picturesque' initiative.
- Improving access to the Dell in Plas Newydd and restoring key features from the time when the Ladies of Llangollen lived there.
- Artwork commissioned of the project area to be used for promotion purposes.

**RESOLVED - That the presentation be noted.**

**10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The AONB Manager (HS) presented the Forward Work Programme and reported on the main items scheduled. The main points of interest were:

- On the AONB management plan, advice was awaited from NRW and budget pressures may result in the need for funding contributions from Welsh Government.
- The AONB Forum at Llanrhaedr Springs had been well attended.
- The Climate Change project was currently on hold but remained an aspiration.
- SP network lines - examples given of potential schemes at Plas Newydd and Offa's Dyke path.

Information was highlighted on projects being undertaken by each of the partnership working groups using the funding allocated. The Assistant AONB Officer (DS) reported that the Land Management group had commissioned a film highlighting the importance of ash trees in the landscape and an aerial survey to photograph Alun Valley at Loggerheads to monitor the impact of Ash dieback.

The AONB Officer (HS) continued that a project by the Understanding and Enjoyment working group involved the restoration of three stone stiles near Cilcain. Following concerns raised by Councillor David Kelly about historic stone stiles near Minera which were not protected by Cadw, the officer stated that the AONB management plan sought to recognise the importance of retaining such historic features in the landscape.

**RESOLVED - That the Forward Work Programme be noted.**

**11 FUTURE MEETING DATES 2019**

21 June 2019 in Ruthin  
22 November 2019 in Wrexham

The Chair advised that he and the AONB Officer would report back to the Committee on their meeting with the Chair of the Llŷn AONB.