



**Bryniau Clwyd a
Dyffryn Dyfrdwy**
Clwydian Range
and Dee Valley

Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Draft Management Plan 2014 - 2019

**PART ONE
STRATEGY**

December 2014



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STRATEGY**

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INTRODUCTION

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the dramatic upland frontier to North Wales embracing some of the country's most wonderful countryside.

The Clwydian Range is an unmistakeable chain of heather clad summits topped by Britain's most strikingly situated hillforts. Beyond the windswept Horseshoe Pass, over Llantysilio Mountain, lies the glorious Dee Valley with historic Llangollen, a famous market town rich in cultural and industrial heritage.

The Offa's Dyke National Trail traverses this specially protected area, one of the least discovered yet most welcoming and easiest to explore of Britain's finest landscapes.

About this Plan.

This Management Plan is the first overarching 5 year strategy for the newly formed Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is a plan for all those with an interest in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley and has been prepared by the AONB Unit in close collaboration with key partners and stake holders. This is a five-year plan for the entire community of the AONB not just the AONB unit. It also recognises that the AONB has an impact on the wider region and can be affected by influences outside of its boundary. It is a Plan for the AONB, its communities, businesses, visitors and organisations and will require all who have an interest in the AONB to work together to achieve its aspirations. It will ensure that AONB purposes are being delivered whilst contributing to the aims and objectives of other strategies for the area.

This Management Plan is different from its predecessors in that it also begins to tackle the question of what the AONB can produce to meet society's needs whilst ensuring the achievement of AONB's purposes to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

SECTION ONE

1..AONB DESIGNATION

The Clwydian Range was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in July 1985. In 2011 following detailed work by the Countryside Council for Wales and the three Local Authorities of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham the AONB designation was extended to include the Dee Valley. This is the most recent landscape designation in Wales and makes the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB for largest of the 5 AONBs in Wales.

1.1 Purpose of the Designation

AONBs together with National Parks recognise our finest landscapes and set a framework for their protection and enhancement. The primary statutory purpose of designating a tract of Countryside as an AONB is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. The concept of 'natural beauty' includes the protection of flora, fauna and geological as well as landscape features. However, it is very important that the cultural dimension of the landscape, including the historical, spiritual and inspirational elements, as well as the physical human shaping of the land is fully recognised. In Wales the added dimensions of the language provides an essential element of cultural richness that must be recognised too. These should all be integrated into the management of AONBs.

1.2 The significance of AONB designation

The power to designate an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty comes from the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. The purposes, duties and management requirements for AONBs are set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Section 82 of the CROW Act establishes the primary purpose of AONB designation as the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

Section 85 places a duty on all public bodies to have regard to the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area in undertaking any functions or actions affecting an AONB. It is not the purpose of designation to stop development but the planning authorities will consider any development proposal to ensure that it does not unduly harm the character and appearance of the AONB; it is sensitively located and designed; and it complements or enhances the special qualities and features of the area.

Section 89 requires the local authorities in whose area an AONB lies to prepare and publish an AONB Management Plan to guide policy development and management actions.

1.3 Who is the Plan for?

The Plan is designed to provide a framework that can inform and guide anyone who undertakes activities that may affect the AONB. These will include:

Relevant Authorities – All public bodies and statutory undertakers – as defined in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 – that have a duty to have regard for the purposes of AONBs. This plan, in defining the areas special qualities and features sets out an agenda for managing change that will help these bodies to fulfil their statutory duties. The Joint Committee of the AONB represents and acts on behalf of the three local Authorities of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.

Partners of the AONB – organisations and individuals that have a key role in delivering and championing the programmes of the AONB – as represented by the AONB Partnership

Landowners and Land managers – The Plan seeks to work with landowners and land managers and recognises the key role they have to play in realising the overall vision.

Local Communities – The plan commits to working with those who live and work within the AONB and identifies the importance of communities in defining and caring for the landscape. The plan sets out an agenda for working with the communities of the AONB.

1.4 Governance

Since the expansion of the AONB to include the Dee Valley, parts of which fall in to Wrexham County Borough Council, a governance review has been undertaken in order to develop more appropriate working structure that reflects the joint approach between the three Local Authorities of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham as well as the need to expand to include other partnerships in the new AONB.

AONB Joint Committee 2014

The three Local Authorities of Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire entered into the Legal Agreement to jointly discharge their AONB functions by means of a Joint Committee for the AONB in the summer of 2014. The Committee is made up of Lead members (members of the Authority's Executive or Cabinet) of each Local Authority and has the power act on behalf of those Local Authority's in delivering the purposes of the AONB.

AONB Partnership 2015

The AONB Partnership is an effective resource in the range and depth of political and professional expertise and experience. It represents the local authorities, landowners, farmers, conservation and recreation interests. The Partnership supports the delivery of the AONB Management Plan through its expertise and experience in a broad range of fields related to landscape management. It is supported by an Officer's Working Group of relevant officers from the constituent local authorities and Natural Resources Wales.

SECTION TWO

Setting the Plan in Context.

European Context

2.1 European Landscape Convention

The UK signed up to the European Landscape Convention in 2007. The Convention clearly sets out an agenda for landscape protection and management on a European level and as such is an important element in informing a strategic approach. The Convention asks member states:

- a) to recognise landscapes in law as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity;*
- b) to establish and implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning.*
- c) to establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of landscape policies.*
- d) to integrate landscape into their regional and town planning policies and in its cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape.*

Specifically the Convention asks each country to undertake to raise awareness of landscape protection, identify special landscape characteristics, and to set and implement objectives for protection, management and planning of the landscape.

2.2 International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources – Category V Landscapes

AONBs together with other designated landscapes in the UK are part of a global network and sit within a worldwide category of protected areas known as “Protected Landscapes”. Category V refers to one of six categories of protected areas worldwide. Category V Landscapes recognise the significance of AONBs in global terms and ensures a consistent approach to landscape conservation internationally. The IUCN recognises that thinking on protected areas is undergoing a fundamental shift. “Whereas protected areas were once planned against people, now it is recognised that they need to be planned with local people, and often for and by them as well. Where once the emphasis was on setting places aside, we now look to develop linkages between strictly protected core areas and the areas around: economic links which benefit local people, and physical links, via ecological corridors, to provide more space for species and natural processes.”

National Context

2.3 The Environment Bill

Environment Bill emphasises the importance of considering the management of our natural resources, on land and sea, in a more integrated way and places sustainable development at the heart of its approach. It sets out a new statutory framework for the integrated and sustainable management of our natural resources in order to deliver a healthier, more resilient Wales through economic, social and environmental benefits.

2.4 Taking the Long View

Welsh Government Statement for AONBs and National Parks.

This draft policy statement sets out the Welsh Governments policy framework for statutory designated landscapes in Wales. It requires designated landscapes to contribute to meeting the challenges of sustainable development through the delivery of their statutory purposes.

It set out a vision for AONBs and National Parks to be living, working landscapes, exemplars of sustainable development, with vibrant rural communities, extensive recreational opportunities as well as thriving ecosystems rich in biodiversity.

It calls for Protected Landscapes in Wales to be areas where new and innovative solutions to environmental challenges will be developed, tested and shared.

It specifically promotes an 'ecosystem approach' to landscape management which means considering how it regulates our environment and its key services including economic and social wellbeing.

2.5 River Basin Management Plans - 2015

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley falls into two River Basin Districts - the Dee and the Clwyd. Natural Resources Wales are currently consulting on the River Dee Basin Management Plan and the River Clwyd Catchment Management Plan due to be completed in 2015. Both plans outline measure to improve the water environment, its river lakes and streams, and encompass all of the issues and pressures on the water environment. The plans recognise that river basin management can deliver multiple benefits. For example the management of the uplands can not only manage flood waters but can also deliver better water quality and help in carbon capture.

SECTION THREE

3.1 An Ecosystem Approach

What is the landscape of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley delivering for us and how can we ensure that it can continue to deliver?

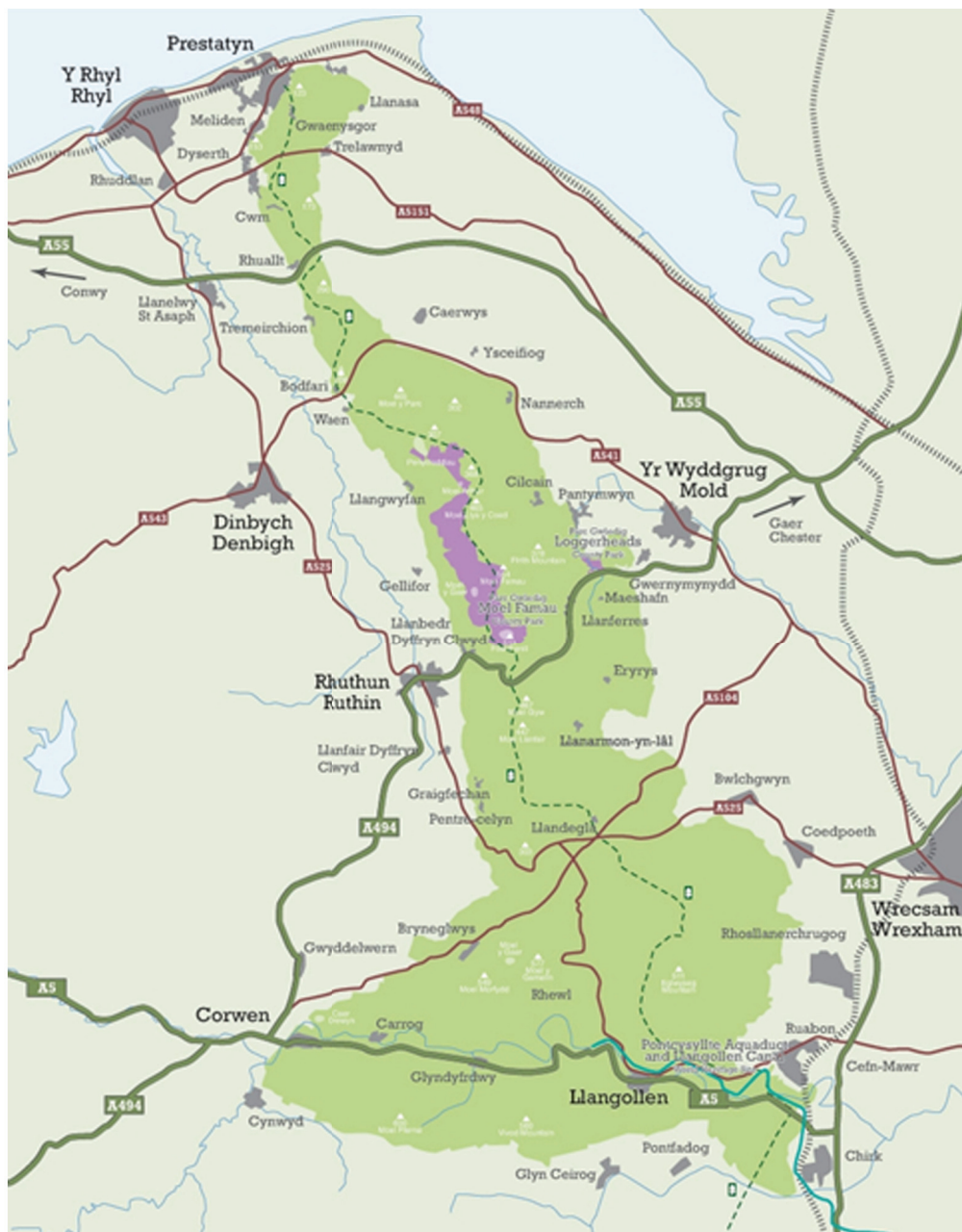
The natural systems of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley touch our lives every day. Whether living in, Mold, Wrexham or Rhyl or in the more rural areas, we rely on these natural systems to support us. They underpin our health, wealth and happiness and give us a sense of place, pride and identity.

Well looked after the AONB will continue to provide us with some of the essentials of life including clean air and water, food, fuel and raw materials. It helps to regulate our climate; stores flood waters, filters pollution, and provides opportunities for us to improve our health and wellbeing. The Plan therefore needs to consider what benefits the AONB can provide to meet the needs of society and respond to current issues such as the need to produce more food, improve health and well-being and adapt to the effects of a changing climate.

It is also recognised that the landscape of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley has an influence on ecosystems, communities and economies far beyond the boundary of the designation. For example the river catchment of the Dee has its beginnings in the Clwydian Range and the Berwyn Mountains but extends far beyond through Denbighshire, Wrexham, Flintshire and Cheshire. Activity within these catchments therefore is potentially wide reaching and so where necessary we need to consider these impacts. This is equally true of the communities and businesses outside of the AONB that nevertheless rely on the outstanding quality of the landscape on their doorstep to thrive.

Provisioning Services	Regulating Services	Cultural Services	Supporting Services
<i>Products of ecosystems such as water, food and The supply of raw materials.</i>	<i>The results of natural processes such as water purification and air quality.</i>	<i>'Non-material' benefits that result from our interaction with the natural environment.</i>	<i>Functions provided by ecosystems that underpin all of the other services.</i>
Water Supply	Air Quality	Inspiration	Soil Formation
Clean water is essential for life. The hill slopes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley are part of the Dee and Clwyd catchments supplying water for commercial and domestic use.	Plants and trees are central to the cycle of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. They have an important role to play in regulating levels of air pollution.	The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley is renowned for the beauty of its landscapes and its sense of place. The area has provided inspiration for many famous artists and writers. The special qualities of the AONB continue to be a source of inspiration and enables people to escape and find spiritual renewal.	Soil is formed by the interaction between plants, micro-organisms and the underlying geology. We depend on healthy soils for growing food. Soils are slow to form but can be quickly degraded by poor land management, erosion and the impacts of weather and climate
Food	Climate Regulation and carbon storage	Tranquility	Biodiversity
Farmers in the AONB produce food and other raw materials. The farmed environment is a major producer of lamb, beef and dairy.	Plants and trees have an influence on climate at both local and global scales. They absorb and store carbon from the atmosphere. The peaty soils of the upland areas of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley have a key role to play in locking up carbon.	Relative tranquillity is recognised as a special quality of the AONB. It provides a resource and a benefit that is greatly valued in the context of busy population centres to the North and East.	Plants and animals drive many of the processes that result in a healthy ecosystem, and the benefits we get from it. The richness and diversity of species and habitats are vital to conserve as they support and underpin many of the processes we rely on to sustain our lives. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley is home to a number of species particularly rare species such as black grouse, hen harrier, water vole and great crested newts.
Timber	Water and Flood Regulation	Cultural Heritage	Water
Woodland covers around xx% of the total area of the AONB. Both broad leaved and conifer woodlands contribute to timber markets at Kronospan but many small woodland owners are engaged in coppicing and charcoal production	The water catchments, rivers and streams help regulate the flow of water and drainage of the land through storage and reducing surface run-off. The moorlands, woodlands and ffridd are particularly important and if properly managed they can help reduce flooding at times of high rainfall, and sustain river flows during droughts	It is the people of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley that give the area its distinctive character and strong sense of place and personal belonging. This heritage has been a source of inspiration to generations of landscape painters, poets and musicians and continues to inspire art, music and poetry in eisteddfodau and literature across the area.	We rely on the natural environment and its functions to provide us with fresh water.
Energy	Erosion Regulation	Access and Recreation	Nutrient Cycling
The AONB has good conditions for a range of renewable energy schemes that are compatible with its special qualities. There is scope for developing resources such as woodfuel and hydro in ways that also improve landscape quality and biodiversity.	The fragile peaty soils of the heather ridges and the thin limestone soils are prone to erosion. Erosion is reduced by tree and vegetation cover.	Recreation and tourism is a significant feature of the area with an extensive network of access routes including the Offa's Dyke National Trail, popular beauty spots at Loggerheads, Moel Famau and the and visitor attractions such as the World Heritage Site. The area attracts millions of visits each year, which makes a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of both visitors and residents	Plants, animals and micro-organisms are essential to the natural cycle of nutrients and help maintain soil and water quality. Increased levels of nutrients such as nitrates and phosphates from sewage and fertilisers can result in poor water quality.

Genetic Diversity	Water Quality		Primary Production
<p>The Bio-diversity and seed bank within the AONB are a resource for the future. Local breeds of sheep and cattle help maintain important genetic diversity and contribute to both our cultural heritage and local distinctiveness.</p>			<p>We rely greatly on processes such as photosynthesis where plant communities use solar energy to convert water and nutrient into biological growth, food and raw materials.</p>
	Pollination		
	<p>The effective pollination of crops by bees and other pollinators is vital to the life cycle of many plants. We rely on this 'natural service' for growing food crops and other and wild flowers.</p>		



SECTION FOUR

What makes the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Special ?

In setting out a programme of management for the protection and enhancement of the AONB it is first necessary to define those individual features and qualities that make up the special character of the area.

Whilst it is recognised that there are a number of other elements within the landscape that are of particular value it is important to identify those features within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley that represent the finest qualities nationally. It is also recognised that this special character is made up of the unique combination of all its Special features and qualities where the features may be considered to be the physical attributes, it rolling moorland, woodlands and cliffs and the qualities are the nonphysical attributes and are related to how we interact with it. These are the sensory aspects of the landscape.

The 2009 management planning process for the Clwydian Range undertook consultation with local communities, public bodies and agencies with an interest in the area's management. The individual features and qualities that make up the special character of the area were identified and formed the basis of the 2009 Management Plan for the Clwydian Range. Similarly the work that took place to deliver the extension to the Clwydian Range into the Dee Valley in 2011 considered the special characteristics of the landscape which were then drawn together into an Interim Statement in 2012. The Special Features and Qualities identified in both pieces of work have been drawn together to form the basis of this plan.

Special Qualities of the AONB	
Landscape Character and Quality	Tranquillity <i>Tranquillity is associated with an atmosphere of calm and stillness; peace and quiet; and with dark night skies.</i>
	Remoteness and wilderness, Space and Freedom <i>Remoteness and wildness is associated with a feeling of trepidation and sometimes even danger. The sublime.</i> <i>Space and freedom is related with access to the landscape and the uninterrupted and extensive views from the high places within it.</i>
	Bro and the link between communities and their landscape <i>A sense of belonging and attachment to the landscape.</i>

Special Features of the AONB	
Habitats and Wildlife	<p>Heather Moorland and Rolling ridges <i>The dramatic moorland ridges of the central Clwydian Range, expansive Llandegla and Ruabon Moors, Llantysilio and North Berwyn.</i></p> <p>Broadleaved woodlands and Veteran trees <i>Bishops Wood, Cwm and Wheeler Valley. Ash dominated Alyn Valley woods and the small copses of the upper Alyn and upland oak woods of the Dee Valley.</i></p> <p>River Valleys and the River Dee <i>The dramatic and powerful river Dee contrasted with the smaller twisting and winding River Alyn and River Wheeler.</i></p> <p>Limestone grasslands, cliffs and screes. <i>Graig Fawr, Loggereads and Bryn Alyn – Llanarmon yn Ial and the spectacular Eglwyseg Escapement</i></p>
Historic Environment	<p>Historic Settlement and Archaeology <i>Historic settlement patterns and conservation areas. The diverse patterns and features in the landscape left by previous generations.</i></p> <p>Industrial Features and the World Heritage Site <i>Limestone quarrying and lead mining, slate quarries and associated tramways and workings – the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and canal, Horseshoe Falls</i></p> <p>Historic Defence Features <i>The dramatic chain of Iron Age Hillforts of the Clwydian Range, Castell Dinas Bran and Chirk Castle and medieval Motte and Baily at Tomon y Rhodwedd, tomen y Fadre and Carrog.</i></p> <p>Small historic features <i>Often unlisted or scheduled a rich mixture of small historic features that are an important part of the rich cultural layer of the landscape – wells, village pumps, boundary stones, waymarkers, milk stands and K6 telephone boxes.</i></p> <p>Traditional boundaries <i>Drystone walls and hedges reflecting traditional skills and craftsmanship and often reflecting local styles and geology.</i></p>
Access Recreation and Tourism	<p>Iconic Visitor and Cultural Attractions <i>Sites that have helped to shape the identity of the AONB as a visitor destination –Loggerheads, Mole Famau, Castell Dinas Bran, Valle Crucis Abbey, the Horseshoe Pass and Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Horseshoe Falls</i></p> <p>The Offa’s Dyke National Trail and Promoted Routes <i>Stretching from Prestatyn Hillside in the north to Llangollen in the South The National Trail makes the AONB particularly accessible. The Dee Valley Way, north Berwyn Way and a network of community paths. Together with extensive areas of Access Land the landscape of the AONB is particularly accessible.</i></p>
Culture and People	<p>The Built Environment <i>The villages and towns, hamlets and scattered settlements.</i></p> <p>People and Communities <i>A rich mix of culture and strong sense of community – the facilities and services that are essential to sustaining rural life.</i></p>

A Vision for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB is a dynamic landscape with flourishing communities and a thriving local economy. This landscape supports a rich biological and cultural resource delivering benefits for the communities, economies and ecosystems far beyond its boundary. The landscape of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley is cherished as a peaceful haven by those living in and visiting the AONB and is treasured for its open spaces and commanding views. Its special features and the benefits they provide are understood and appreciated by all.

The AONB is managed through sound and effective partnerships which ensure that communities and visitors are fully engaged in decision making and are empowered to have a stake in their local landscape and invest in its future.

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley is a flagship for sustainable development and forward planning and its international protection as a category V protected landscape is influential on an international, national and local stage.



LANDSCAPE QUALITY AND CHARACTER

Great diversity of landscape, wide-open views, expansive moorland and dramatic ridges, spectacular cliffs and screes, ancient trees and rich woodland, sweeping river valleys and cascading streams; diverse heathlands and rich floristic grasslands;

Historic settlements and distinctive buildings, dramatic monuments and a tapestry of evidence of human settlement: world heritage site, canals aqueducts and waterways;

dark night skies; clear unpolluted air, peace and tranquillity, remote and wild; ruined abbeys and early churches, picturesque views and ancient ruins; thriving communities, Welsh language and Culture; artistic and literary inspiration, extensive trails and paths;

Cynefin, Belonging.

This section focuses specifically on the qualities of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley and in particular the tranquility it offers, the wide and expansive views in all directions from almost every corner. From the East however views are dominated by the conurbations of Mold, Chester, Wrexham and Merseyside. This has a significant impact on tranquility, particularly at night spilling light onto the darker skies to the West.

This section also recognises the vital role that people have played and continue to play in giving the landscape a distinctive character. Generations of communities have shaped the land, farming, building and moulding the landscape to meet their needs. It is people who give an area its flavour, its culture and its heritage, accumulated over many generations.

Special Qualities

- **Tranquillity,**
- **Remoteness and Wilderness** - Peace and quiet with a hint of danger and surprise
- **Bro and the link between communities and their landscape** - A sense of belonging and attachment to the landscape

Policies	Landscape Quality and Character
	<p>PoISQ1. Conserve and enhance the Special Qualities and distinctive character of the AONB's landscape and associated features.</p> <p>PoISQ2. Safeguard the panoramic views, tranquillity and environmental quality of the AONB.</p> <p>PoISQ3. Secure the equitable, sustainable use of the area's natural resources to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB.</p> <p>PoISQ4. Protect and promote traditional cultural distinctiveness within the AONB including the Welsh language.</p>

Objectives

- SQ01.** Ensure that the natural resources and special qualities of the AONB are recognised and valued.
- SQ02.** Ensure that the impacts of environmental change on the AONB are understood and a strategic response is developed and implemented
- SQ03.** Minimise the cumulative impacts of small-scale change that may erode the special character of the AONB.
- SQ04.** Protect the tranquillity of the AONB and take steps where possible to reduce noise and light pollution.
- SQ05.** Where possible reduce visual intrusion by screening or removing eyesores.
- SQ06.** Establish a monitoring programme from key viewpoints across the AONB

HABITATS AND WILDLIFE

The AONB supports a wide diversity of habitats and species reflecting the local variations in geology, topography, soils, land use and climate. The dramatic moorland ridges of the Clwydian Range and rolling hills of the Dee Valley are mixed with spectacular limestone cliffs, meandering and cascading rivers and scattered woodlands. They contain some of the UK's most important habitats and the significance of these areas for conservation are recognised by designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area for Conservation and a Special Protection Area.

Connectivity

It is the combination and variety of features and habitats in the AONB that taken together make the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley special. It is important to consider how these various components interact and function as an overall ecosystem.

The upland areas and river valleys of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley are providing many ecosystem service benefits for people and communities both within and beyond the AONB. Some are well known such as food, fuel, water and biodiversity as well as cultural services such as recreation and tourism. Others are less apparent, but include flood regulation, soil formation and pollination and are equally critical to human well being.

The AONB contains valued landscapes and natural habitats and its soils and woodlands store carbon. It is an important source of water and food. Its landscape and natural beauty attract visitors seeking recreation and mental refreshment.

Special Features

- Heather Moorland and Rolling ridges
- Broadleaved woodlands and Veteran trees
- River Valleys and the River Dee
- Limestone grasslands, cliffs and screes.

Policies	Habitats and Wildlife
	<p>PolHW1. Secure natural systems and networks that provide more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.</p> <p>PolHW2. Restore, reconnect and expand key habitats and species at a landscape scale in order to increase resilience to environmental change.</p> <p>PolHW3. Ensure that the conservation of habitats is an integral part of agricultural and field sports management.</p> <p>PolHW4. Ensure that the natural benefits and services of the landscape are properly understood and valued.</p>

Heather Moorland and rolling ridges

Most of the moorland within the AONB consists of dry heath although wet heath and blanket bog are also present particularly in the South. Management is primarily for sheep with grouse management also important in the Dee Valley. Although moorland areas in the Clwydian Range are not designated they are still important habitats for protected species. Across the AONB there is a distinctive transitional zone on the lower hillsides where moorland gives way to more fertile low-lying farmland. This upland margin, often known in Wales as ffridd, has a distinctive habitat composition with elements characteristic of both upland and lowland habitats. Ffridd can often be one of the most diverse habitats within the AONB and it particularly important in connecting more fragmented areas.

Objectives

- HMRO1.** Work with the North Wales Bionet Group to maintain or extend the current extent of heather moorland within the AONB.
- HMRO2.** To bring areas of heather moorland into positive productive management.
- HMRO3.** Continue to monitor black grouse and other upland bird species as an indicator of habitat condition.
- HMRO4.** Associate food production with ecosystem management.
- HMRO5.** Support and encourage sustainable grouse moors management where it has positive environmental and economic impacts.
- HMRO6.** Where possible restore areas of former heathland habitat within the AONB.
- HMRO7.** Provide support to farmers and landowners in upland areas to bring moorlands into management schemes.

Limstone Grasslands, Cliffs and Screes.

Calcareous grasslands and limestone outcrops exist throughout the AONB most notably to the North around Prestatyn Hillside and the central areas around Llanarmon yn Ial and Eryrys. The dramatic Eglwyseg Escarpment dominates the Eastern end of the Dee Valley in the South and provides some of the most outstanding features of the AONB.

These areas are associated with shallow, free draining base rich soils supporting rich plant communities. This habitat type contributes greatly to the biodiversity of the AONB. These open areas have traditionally been maintained by grazing livestock but changes in farm practices have led to some areas becoming under-grazed with a subsequent loss of species diversity as scrub encroaches.

Many limestone areas within the AONB are of significant biological and geological interest and as such are afforded protection as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation.

Traditionally these areas have been associated with quarrying and mineral extraction with a few large quarries still in operation, and a wealth of industrial archaeology associated with 19th and early 20th century lead mining.

Objectives

- WVTO1.** Maintain the current extent of calcareous grassland and limestone pavement within the AONB.
- WVTO2.** Bring all areas of public owned / managed limestone grassland, cliffs and screes into favourable management schemes.
- WVTO3.** Provide opportunities for privately owned areas of limestone grassland and pavement to come into favourable management schemes.
- WVTO4.** Ensure that recreational pressure is minimised in sensitive areas.

Woodland and Veteran Trees

Many of these woodlands represent a link with the landscape as it appeared following the last ice age and support a diverse range of flora and fauna. Ash woodlands are particularly important in the Alyn Valley where it has been designated SAC. In other parts of the AONB oak woods are significant. The historic parklands, particularly evident in the Dee Valley contain some of the oldest trees in the AONB and are key components of the historic landscape as well as supporting significant biodiversity.

Objectives

- WVTO1.** To maintain the current extent of broadleaved woodland and veteran trees within the AONB.
- WVTO2.** Record the current extent and condition of veteran trees in the AONB.
- WVTO3.** To maintain and restore broadleaved woodland towards a favourable condition through the implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans for Mixed Ash Woodlands, Upland Oak Woodlands and Wet Woodlands.
- WVTO4.** Develop publically owned woodlands as models of best practice in broadleaf woodland management.

River Valleys

In considering the River Valleys of the AONB it is important to look beyond the water bodies themselves. For example the management of the moorlands and ffridd, maintenance of woodlands and field boundaries can not only manage flood waters but can also deliver better water quality and help in carbon capture. Also we should remember that the water ultimately flows far beyond the boundary of the AONB so the impact of land management within the AONB is potentially far reaching.

The River Dee is the most dominant of the rivers in the AONB with the Dee catchment extending northwards to include the River Alyn in the heart of the Clwydian Range. The Dee is designated SAC and is important of Atlantic salmon, otter and a range of wetland habitats. The Wheeler is the other significant river forming and important part of the Clwyd Catchment.

They are dynamic systems and provide a wide range of ecological niches supporting a diverse flora and fauna. They also form important wildlife corridors, enabling dispersion and migration of species.

Objectives

- WVTO1.** Continue to monitor the extent of key indicator species such as otter and water vole in order to gauge habitat condition.
- WVTO2.** Continue to develop a partnership of key agencies and bodies to ensure an integrated and landscape approach to management.
- WVTO3.** Support and develop a landscape scale approach to a programme of invasive species control particularly in relation to Himalayan balsam.
- WVTO4.** Raise awareness amongst the general public and landowners/managers of the importance of the river valleys for biodiversity.

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The AONB has a wealth of archaeological and historic remains that date from the early prehistoric period right through to the Second World War. Sites range from the massive Iron Age Hillforts to the less conspicuous crop marks and finds in the lower areas. The large number of archaeological sites in the AONB are part of the continuous imprint of human activity that contribute to the landscape character. They represent human activity from around the last ice age 12,000 years ago to the more recent but important industrial landscapes associated with mineral and stone extraction.

Many of these archaeological sites are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and are afforded protection through Cadw. Many other historic features, such as boundary stones, village wells and milestones are not protected and as such are much more vulnerable.

Special Features

- Historic settlement and archaeology
- Industrial Features and the World Heritage Site
- Historic defence features
- Small historic features
- Traditional boundaries

Policies	Historic Environment
	<p>PolHE1. To conserve and enhance features and sites of archaeological, cultural or historic importance within the AONB whilst recognising that the whole of the area has an historic dimension.</p> <p>PolHE2. Increase our understanding of all aspect of the Historic Environment of the AONB.</p> <p>PolHE3. Ensure that the World Heritage Site is conserved in the context of its setting within the AONB.</p>

Historic Settlement and Archaeology.

Objectives

- HSAO1.** Work towards a position where the condition/state of all archaeological sites within the AONB is known and appropriate management work is carried out. Utilise HER information, Pan Wales projects, Glastir agri-environment schemes and the planning process to facilitate this.
- HSAO2.** Encourage owners of Historic parks and Gardens within the AONB to maintain and restore existing parkland features as noted in the Register.
- HSAO3.** Increase the profile of the Historic Environment through effective and



consistent interpretation and information.

- HSAO4.** Incorporate information gathered as part of the Historic Environment Record into the continuous management process within the AONB.

Industrial Features and World Heritage Site.

The tranquillity and beauty of the AONB today in many places masks the bustling and thriving industry that once dominated many parts of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley during the Industrial Revolution. The drive to win natural resources from the landscape; lead, limestone, slate and sand, saw entrepreneurs and prospectors push high onto remote hillsides and deep into wooded valleys in search of fortune. The same period saw great innovation in over-coming the natural barriers of the landscape and features such as the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, the Alyn Valley's Leete and tramways to Moel Fferna and Llantysilio and extensive lead works at Minera remain as dramatic reminders of past ingenuity and determination.

Throughout the AONB remains of winding sheds, engine houses, tramways and limekilns are an important part of the special character of the landscape and offer reminders of past communities.

Objectives

- DFS01.** To secure the integrity of the outstanding universal values of the World Heritage Site.
- DFS02.** Maintenance of key views to and from the WHS and the visual and cultural setting.
- DFS03.** Take steps to limit the impact visitor pressures on the historic integrity and setting of the World Heritage site
- DFS04.** Ensure a consistent approach to interpretation, signage and quality of the experience across partnership authorities.
- DFS05.** Raise awareness of the importance of industrial sites and features within the planning and AONB.
- DFS06.** Develop an "at risk " register for key industrial historic sites and work towards programmes that will respond where action is required.

Hillforts and Defensive Structures

The medieval strong holds of Castell Dinas Brân and Chirk Castle associate the Southern part of the AONB with the defence of the Dee Valley by first the Welsh and subsequently the English under Edward I. The impressive chain of Iron Age Hillforts of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley point to a much earlier occupation and defensive settlement. Later again the

association of Owain Glyndwr with Corwen and Ederynion give a strong cultural and historical root in defence of national identity.

Objectives

- DFS01.** Ensure continuation of the Heather and Hillforts Project to maintain existing level of work at the 4 hillforts of Penycloddiau, Moel Arthur, Moel y Gaer Llanbedr and Moel Fenlli and aim to continue programme to include Moel y Gaer Bodfari and Moel Hiraddug.
- DFS02.** Ensure the structural integrity features and ensure that impacts of visitor pressure is minimised.

Small Historic Features

The landscape and particularly the villages of the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty contain many small features which cumulatively help enhance the area and give it its character. Some still have a useful function, like post boxes and village greens and parish commons. Others like old fingerpost road signs, no longer maintained by the Highway Authority, milestones or K6 red telephone boxes no longer have a use and can easily disappear from our landscape.

These everyday features are often taken for granted but our settlement landscapes would be the poorer without them.

Objectives

- DFS03.** Raise awareness of the importance of small historic features within both the planning and highways environments by providing training sessions to professionals.
- DFS04.** Encourage Communities to identify and map features within their communities on a standard database which is compatible with the HER.
- DFS05.** Encourage Communities to adopt these features and act as their champions by raising awareness within community councils and youth groups.

Boundaries

Boundary features in the Clwydian Range largely reflect local circumstances and geology. In the limestone areas the boundaries are predominantly stone built, in the more recently enclosed upland areas boundaries are predominantly fence lines and in the agricultural areas of the lower slopes in both the east and west, hedges predominate.

Objectives

- BO1.** Using SDF and other funds develop a Countryside Grant schemes to support projects which will maintain and enhance the most important boundaries in the AONB as well as other Special Features
- BO2.** In line with aspirations within *The Welsh Historic Environment Strategic Statement* (2009) raise the skills base amongst the local workforce to increase the number of people who can carry out the necessary conservation and repair work.
- BO3.** Identify the most important boundaries within the AONB.

ACCESS RECREATION AND TOURISM

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley is an historic gateway to Wales, crossed by a number of access corridors. These corridors, including main road routes (such as the A5, A55 and A494), upland passes (including the Horseshoe Pass) and the rail routes, have varied historical significance as well as being highly important for tourism. In 2007 a Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the Clwydian Range AONB was prepared, to run up to 2013 and beyond. It formed the basis for the award to the AONB of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and has been actively used by the AONB team and its partners to guide their tourism related work in the area. This strategy was reviewed in 2014 encompassing the new parts of the AONB in the South. The strategy gives recognition to the value of tourism to the economy, environment and communities of the AONB and its wider area of influence. Sustainable Tourism is defined as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

Health and well-being.

The trend across the UK and other developed nations is for physical activity levels to decline. This is associated with widespread use of the private car, an increase in sedentary leisure activities and greater mechanisation in the home, workplace and public places. Illness as an outcome of physical inactivity has been conservatively calculated to be £1.08 Billion per annum in direct costs to the NHS alone. Indirect costs have been estimated as £8.2 Billion per annum. Studies have shown that in a UK context for every £ spent on developing and promoting access to the countryside presents a £19 saving to the health Service. Investment in infrastructure and action to facilitate increased activity levels amongst local communities through access to the countryside is critical therefore in promoting significantly improved levels of health and wellbeing.

Special Features

- Iconic Visitor and Cultural Attractions
- The Offa's Dyke National Trail and Promoted Route

Policies	Access, Recreation and Tourism
	<p>PoIART1. To promote the sustainable use and enjoyment and understanding of the landscape of the AONB in a way that contributes to local prosperity and social inclusiveness.</p> <p>PoIART2. Ensure the attractiveness of the AONB’s landscape and views as a primary basis for the areas tourism are retained.</p> <p>PoIART3. Ensure that all visitors and residents are able to experience and enjoy the benefits of the special qualities of the AONB within environmental limits.</p> <p>PoIART4. Ensure that the honey pots and other key access points are managed to a high standard and that they act as models of good practice in access and conservation delivery.</p> <p>PoIART5. Ensure the Country Parks and the Offa’s Dyke National Trail provide effective gateways to the AONB in promoting understanding and awareness of its key qualities and features.</p>

Iconic Visitor and Cultural Attractions.

Key sites such as Loggerheads, Moel Famau, Castell Dinas Bran, Valle Crucis, the River Dee and Pontcysyllte aqueduct have been reproduced by early landscape painters such as Richard Wilson, Turner and Edward Pugh, and as such have particular significance in the very early presentation of picturesque landscapes. They have, in part, contributed to a very strong tradition of tourism to these areas within the AONB.

These are the sites that help to give an area a sense of place because of the cultural attachment associated with them. The influence of Loggerheads and Moel Famau on the central Clwydian Range has been significant and spanned generations. It has in part shaped communities and been a corner stone of the tourism in this area.

Similarly Castell Dinas Brân, Valle Crucis Abbey, Pontcysyllte and the and the Horseshoe Pass combine to give the Southern part of the AONB a sense of the sublime and has provoked generations of visitors in search of the picturesque to flock to the Dee Valley.



Objectives

- IVCO1.** To ensure that visitors and the tourism industry understand the need for, and support the conservation and enhancement of, the special qualities of the AONB as key assets upon which tourism is based.
- IVCO2.** Promote and assist convenient and sustainable access into the AONB and special places within it.
- IVCO3.** Continue to develop public transport links and develop a strategy to reduce congestion between honey-pots and with other centres of population.
- IVCO4.** Investigate ways to reduce congestion around key visitor areas.
- IVCO5.** Target information relating to the Countryside Code, behaviour and the Country Park and provide information relating to the impact of visitors on conservation and remedy works including tree felling.
- IVCO6.** Ensure that both Loggerheads Moel Famau Country Parks continue to act as exemplars in delivering projects in key areas and manage both sites towards favourable condition through sensitive ecological management.
- IVCO7.** Provide assistance to tourism businesses in the area should be helped to embrace the opportunities and responsibilities of being in a protected area, understanding more about the AONB, improving their management of resources and informing their guests about the area.

The Offa's Dyke Trail and Promoted Routes

The Offa's Dyke Path National Trail is a key feature of the AONB, running its entire length from Prestatyn Hillside in the North to the Dee Valley in the South. It links many of the AONB's most outstanding features crossing the peaks and hillforts of the Clwydian Range, the dramatic moorland plateau of the Ruabon Mountain before crossing the Eglwyseg Escapement and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

The AONB is also well served by an extensive network of rights of way, which have been actively maintained, identified and promoted for various kinds of access, with some promoted as named trails. The River Dee provides a major facility for recreation.

Objectives

- ODPO1.** Continue a programme of Rights of Way improvement across the AONB through the use of the Community miles Initiative and other area access improvement works focusing on increasing opportunities to access the countryside.
- ODPO2.** Provide increased opportunities where appropriate for cycling and horse riding in the AONB and promote these opportunities.
- ODPO3.** Ensure each Local Access Forum has a good understanding of the needs of the AONB through regular liaison
- ODPO4.** Raise awareness of the acknowledged health and well-being benefits provided by the AONB and develop initiatives promoting physical activity particularly walking and cycling.

- ODPO5.** Understand and work towards removing physical and psychological barriers to access.
- ODPO6.** Investigate ways to promote the trail with local tourism businesses and to develop initiatives that will strengthen business links.
- ODPO7.** Strengthen links between the Trail and nearby settlements and places of interest utilising the wider Rights of Way Network and Public Transport.
- ODPO8.** Monitor erosion in key areas and develop a programme of measures that will reduce the impact of the trail on the landscape by limiting width or depth of path as appropriate.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Policies	Historic Environment
	<p>PolHE1. Ensure that new development adopts the highest standards of design and is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the AONB.</p> <p>PolHE2. Retain and improve essential services and facilities for local people.</p> <p>PolHE3. Ensure that local businesses and communities feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for their surroundings.</p>

Objectives

- BE01.** Ensure new development in and around the AONB is sympathetically located in the landscape, and is well designed to complement the character and appearance of the area and its setting, particularly in respect of visual impact, scale, materials and landscaping.
- BE02.** Conserve and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of historic villages, buildings and gardens within the AONB.
- BE03.** Promote action to reduce the visual impact of prominent existing development in the AONB.

Culture and People

Communities need to be at the heart of any vision. Rural communities need economic and social sustainability. There are two key areas that need support. The first is local facilities such as shops, pubs, schools and youth clubs, which provide vital services for the community and local employment, and includes more recent necessities of life such as mobile phone and internet access.

The second is countering rural exclusion by which opportunities are limited by issues such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing and poor public transport. A lack of affordable housing for local people is another important factor. Communities may also have specific needs for particular groups, including older and younger people and the less able. It is also important that the local communities feel that they are part of the AONB and they have a part to play in formulating policy and the decision making process. Communities should directly benefit from being in the AONB through projects that are targeted at communities and their environs through the Sustainable Development Fund.

Objectives

- CPO1.** Help local communities to retain and enhance access to essential community services and facilities.
- CPO2.** Support the development of affordable housing for local people in appropriate locations, whilst maintaining the highest standards of design and landscaping.
- CPO3.** Foster a sense of place and local pride to secure social well-being.
- CPO4.** Ensure that the governance of the AONB promotes effective partnerships and fosters opportunities for communities to engage in the management of the AONB.