

Joint Committee Meeting 26th June 2015
Item 7 Appendix 1
Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
(AONB)
2014-15
Annual Report



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Introduction

Times are becoming increasingly difficult in the Public Sector, especially within Services that are seen as non-statutory. But what value do we actually see? The Officers of the Service see the benefit of what we do in so many ways, physical well-being through walking and running; the opportunity to communicate, through a cup of coffee with friends; Education through learning about the nature of the area; Information from the free leaflets in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Centre at Loggerheads. Just to be out in the fresh air on the coast or countryside what value can be placed on one's mental health?

The AONB Team and partners are a positive group. NRW are a key player in the success of the Service, the grant aid received from NRW makes a massive difference and most of this report shows how much of the grant aid enables the Service to deliver on NRW's proposals. We were pleased to welcome NRW's CX for his second visit to the AONB. He visited projects in the Clwydian Range to contrast his earlier visit to the Dee Valley

Staff expertise and retention is a major factor in our success, 4 members of the service have over 70 years of experience between them and have worked for the service from the late 1980's to early 1990's.

The Northern Protected areas and the Canals and Rivers Trust worked on a number of projects from the P4G Programme including delivering a new set of photographs for the areas, business seminars and work to promote the World Heritage Site.

Staff went to the Elan Valley to see the work being carried out by the Elan Valley trust, Welsh Water and its Ranger Service.

Locally 'Hidden Loggerheads' a series of underground and nature videos was launched at Theatre Clwyd Mold, it was attended by a number of invited guests including the Leader of Flintshire County Council.

The AONB Officer had been requesting AONB Member Training for a number of years; this was delivered. It was hosted in the fabulous Plas Tan y Bwlch Centre in Snowdonia National Park. Welsh Government funded the training and the NAAONB organised it. It proved an excellent two days for our two members who thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

The Sustainable Development Fund again proved a fantastic opportunity to grant aid 49 projects. It is really pleasing that our investment of some of that money is now coming to be realised in the reconstruction of the Chain Bridge in the World Heritage Site.

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) stretches from Prestatyn in the North, to Chirk Castle in the South; it includes the attractive towns of Llangollen and Corwen and encompasses 390 square kilometres of the three Counties of Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire. Map

It is the largest of 5 AONBs in Wales and is nationally protected and locally managed.

From 1996 until November 2014 the AONB was managed by a Joint Advisory Committee and an Interim Joint Advisory Committee (IJAC), this was superseded by The Joint Committee of the three constituent Local Authorities. It met for the first time on the 14th November 2014 and has subsequently appointed the AONB Partnership (Similar to the former IJAC) which meets for the first time on the 15th May 2015.

Governance

The Joint Committee was established in 2015 it met twice in November 2014 and February 2015 firstly in Ruthin and secondly in Wrexham. The first meeting establish a chair for the Joint Committee, Councillor Hugh Jones from WCBC and Vice Chair Councillor Huw Jones DCC. The Joint Committee agreed to establish an AONB Partnership at its first meeting as per the Legal agreement. Members appointed to the Partnership have a primary responsibility to ensure that the Partnership furthers the statutory purposes set out in the CROW Act 2000. They should regard themselves first and foremost as members of the Partnership, with a duty to act in the best interests of the Partnership and of the AONB, rather than representatives of any organisation or interest. The 16 Partnership Members (Which excludes the 9 LA Partnership Members) were agreed at a Sub Group of the JC on the 19th March 2015.

The Joint Committee agreed the following at its two meetings:-

- Its Constitution and Legal Agreement
- To advertise and appoint an AONB Partnership
- Its Budget
- To consult on Draft Management Plan
- To receive the Forward Work Programme
- It has also received reports on the following:-
- Interim JAC Minutes
- Climate Change Project
- Sustainable Tourism Strategy

As a consequence and possibly in recognition of this closer working relationship and the importance of the AONB around the WHS, the AONB Partnership Chair and AONB Officer have been appointed to the World Heritage Site Board.

A very positive funding message has been sign posted by Wrexham County Borough Council. It increased their agreed £5,000 contribution for 2014-15 to £12,000 and their 2015-16 contribution to £19,000.

Planning and Development

The built environment is one of the special features of the AONB and contributes to the character and appearance of the area. There is pressure for new development in and around the AONB as an attractive place to live, work and visit, but particular care is required to ensure that new development fits well in the landscape. An important role of the former JAC since its inception has been to advise on development policies and proposals affecting the AONB, and this role will be taken forward by the new Joint Committee and Partnership.

The overall number of consultations referred to the IJAC in 2014-15 was 332 - an increase of 11% over 2013-14.

The majority of consultations (77%) were planning or related applications for development referred by the local planning authorities (LPA's). Informal requests for pre and post-application advice accounted for 13% of consultations, with the remainder made up of policy consultations (8%), Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (1%) and appeals (1%).

The largest source of consultations continues to be the LPA's, mainly Denbighshire which has the largest part of the AONB and accounts for 64% of the total number of consultations.

The largest category of development was householder applications (30%) followed by residential (18%). Energy related applications continue to feature very strongly, accounting for 12% of all consultations. Tourism development made up 10% of consultations, followed by commercial/retail (9%), utilities (8%) and agriculture/forestry (6%).

There were 26 policy consultations during the year, ranging from SPG's produced by Denbighshire to changes in national planning policy and regulation proposed by Welsh Government associated with development of the Planning (Wales) Bill.

The majority of consultations (82%) continue to be handled by officers in line with the current scheme of delegation adopted by the former JAC. The IJAC Consultation Sub Committee met on three occasions and decided 8% of consultations, with the remaining 10% dealt with as delegated urgent matters in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair of the committee.

The majority of planning applications (86%) were granted permission, which is consistent with the approval rate in previous years. Only 9% were refused, and 5% of applications were withdrawn by the applicant prior to determination.

Analysis of LPA responses to IJAC comments on planning applications shows that most of the substantive comments made by the committee were accepted in full (39%) or in part (37%). The remaining 24% of comments were not accepted or acted upon by the LPA's. These results show a modest increase over last year in the proportion of IJAC comments either fully or partly accepted by the LPA's.

Four planning appeals came forward during the year. Two were dismissed (18 dwellings adjoining Siglen Uchaf, Gwernymynydd, and replacement of a caravan with a chalet at Bryn Golau, Nannerch), one allowed (conversion of boiler room/glasshouse to a dwelling at Llanbedr

Hall), and one still pending (2 dwellings west of Ty Coch, Froncysyllte). The Siglen Uchaf application was dismissed because of the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

During the year 16 potential cases of unauthorised development affecting the AONB were referred to the LPA Enforcement Teams for investigation. These included advertisement signs, caravans, lighting and engineering/tipping works.

Project in and adjacent to the AONB

It is vitally important that the AONB connects to the surrounding areas, so that those who live there can enjoy the benefits and contribute to the landscape of the AONB, with this in mind the AONB are particularly focused on two area of work for the future: - Volunteers Strategy and Outreach Strategy these will mutually benefit the AONB and the population who live around it. Two major projects in the North of the AONB and its surrounding area have been the Green Lynx Project and the Cycling Centre of Excellence, which is both closely linked to the AONB, and the Countryside Officers based in Rhyl.

The AONB Team has led and supported on a number of other projects including:-

- Adoption of Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2015-20 and as part of the action plan award of AONB Badge to 5 Activity Operators in the AONB.
- The Alyn and Wheeler landscape-scale project obtained grant funding from WREN and staff have continued to support implementation of the project via the NWWT project officer.

Case Studies

Jubilee Tower

The Jubilee Tower is one of the most visited sites in the AONB and one of the most iconic structures in the landscape although there has never been anything on site that says what it is or tells its story.

Following the successful excavation and reconsolidation of one of the bastions at the Jubilee Tower RDP funding was secured to develop some information and interpretation for the tower.

The project developed four strands:

- The story of the Jubilee Tower
- The recent works carried out
- The views from the tower
- Orientation

Bronze cast plaques have been placed at the viewing area on top of the tower that tell the story of



why the tower was built and its eventual collapse. Smaller bronze plaques have been placed around the walls of the viewing area indicating key landmarks in the view such as Liverpool Cathedral, Snowdon and Blackpool Tower.

Two panels have also been placed around the newly revealed bastion describing the recent excavation work.

A leaflet has also been produced including a map showing the route from Pen Barras and the Forest car park to the top of Moel Famau and providing simple information about the short walk to the top.

The project also took the opportunity to improve access onto the centre of the tower and create a circular seating area within this space. Stone craftsman reused the original quoin stones to create a circular seating area in the centre of the tower.



The project has for the first time brought together a suit of information that celebrates the Jubilee Tower and presents the story to the many visitors that come every year. It also concludes a programme of work to raise the profile of the Tower and invest in the structure of the building that started in 2010 with the 200th Anniversary Celebration event and lead to HLF investment into major excavation and reconsolidation work in 2013. It concludes the biggest investment in the most visited historic building in the AONB since it was built in 1810.

AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy

In November Ken Skates, Deputy Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture, launched the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the AONB in Corwen. The launch brought together tourism businesses and professionals from across the AONB and reflected the wide engagement across the sector in the development of the strategy.

The process brought together for the first time businesses from both the Clwydian Range and the newly designated Dee Valley in developing a unifying strategy for the AONB. Workshops facilitated by the Tourism Company were held in four key locations; Llanasa in the North, Loggerheads and Corwen and Froncysyllte in the South. Sessions were well attended and

worked towards developing a shared Action Plan across four key areas:

- Marketing
- Product Development around activities and experiences
- Business Engagement
- Visitor and Sense of Place.



A single session bringing businesses and tourism bodies from across the AONB was also held in Pwllglas in order to prioritise action and share best practice.

The development of the strategy apart from setting a clear agenda for tourism management in the AONB over the next five years provided a mechanism to bring tourism groups from across the AONB together for the first time. Where the northern part of the AONB the Clwydian Range Tourism Group have become well established and have benefitted from a strong relationship with the AONB over a longer period, in the Dee Valley the concept of an AONB is less understood and some tourism groups are less well established. The process helped to provide a clear focus to newly established groups in the Dee Valley such as

the Outdoor Providers Group, the Ederynion Business Group and the Wrexham Business Ambassadors.

Business Engagement

In parallel the AONB has also given support for the Ederynion Business Group to develop an action plan for the upper Corwen and the Dee Valley ensuring that it is properly linked to the wider AONB Strategy. The Plan brings in businesses on the edge of the AONB and has proved to be a valuable process in building capacity within the group and providing a clear common direction for the business sector in this part of the AONB.

In a joint project with other Protected Landscapes in North Wales, with funding through Visit Wales' Partnership for Growth programme, a number of business engagement workshops have been held which have complemented this business support. Sessions on social media, walking opportunities and natural navigation have been held at Corwen, Prestatyn and Loggerheads. These sessions have proved to be useful awareness raising opportunities in promoting a strong sense of place for the AONB within the business community.

AONB Guide Course

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB has been working with the outdoor sector in the Dee Valley to develop a guide qualification that seeks to provide tourism operators a clear understanding of the local area, the components of the landscape that make it special, including biodiversity, culture, farming and history.



The course was developed with Coleg Menai / Llandrillo to accreditation level City in Guilds and is established as a local module for the Green Badge Tourism Guide.

Eight businesses signed up for the course from a range of outdoor sector businesses including kayaking, white water rafting, walking and cycling.

These participants very much saw the course as continuous professional development for their staff and a qualification that will give their businesses a

competitive edge in a very busy market. Visitors to the area will be given a much richer experience through providers that have been awarded the AONB Guide status.



The course took place over six sessions over 6 months and was a combination of formal sessions, field work and assessments. Ken Skates, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture awarded the successful participants with their AONB badges and certificates in November.

The course is running again this year with businesses from across the AONB signed up

Corwen Welcomes the Train

The extension of the Llangollen Railway's service to Corwen has been long anticipated and subject to many set-backs. As work really started to progress it became evident that a station building near the centre of Corwen would not be possible in the near future, and the decision was taken to create a temporary platform a little to the east of Corwen so that the line was operational.

The AONB became involved in creating the link between the station and the town and in promoting the area on the strength of the surrounding countryside and the leisure opportunities it offers. To this end, we worked extensively with the local councillor, the Railway Steering Group, Camp Little Hope (artists in residence through an Arts Council funded project looking at the use of the central meadow) and the local business and tourism groups. A grant was secured from Cadwyn Clwyd and Camp Little Hope produced an Access Design Plan – looking at the existing signage and interpretation and making recommendations for better solutions, which formed the basis of the rest of the work undertaken. This included: -

- Construction of new paths from the platform building, as well as landscaping the area in front of the building.
- Producing and installing new fingerposts to guide people from the station to the town, museum, and surrounding countryside sites.
- Commissioning an artist to create iconic images of Corwen and the other stations along the line, and of the surrounding countryside. These images are reminiscent of the "Travel Posters" and have been used extensively in the promotional materials produced.
- Creating a suite of new interpretation panels around the town, including a 3D map to help orientate visitors.
- Producing a new booklet for Corwen and the Dee Valley.
- Creating an activity sheet for children to help them enjoy the passing countryside whilst on the train.
- Creating posters and banners for inside and outside the platform building, using the images produced. Also working with the railway volunteers and Cadwyn Clwyd on the transformation of the mobile into a welcoming railway office for visitors with a bespoke bench outside.
- Improving our sites in Corwen, including working with Camp Little Hope over the community orchard and "Dol Corwenna" (the meadow in the centre), installing bespoke benches, creating a new path to Dol Afon, and improving the management of this meadow.
- Undertaking extensive work to the monument in Pen y Pigyn – repairing and repointing the monument, installing a flagpole, removing the old railings and repairing the wall beneath, installing new traditional railings and interpretation panels.
- Improving access to the monument through path resurfacing, drainage, waymarking, installation of benches, and cutting back vegetation to improve views.
- Supporting the local business and tourism groups in promoting Corwen and the surrounding countryside at the launch of the extension, and in the Steam Gala event in March 2015. The images were produced as posters, postcards and mugs, and sold to visitors and locals, as well as promotional materials being distributed.

Llantysilio Green Visitor Gateway to the World Heritage Site

The AONB have successfully delivered a European funded Heritage Tourism Project that has significantly enhanced the visitor experience at the start of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal World Heritage Site.

Through the project, the AONB have entered into a 15 year lease with Llantysilio Estate. This has enabled direct public access from Llantysilio Green to the Horseshoe Falls and the creation of an extended recreational green space and key viewing area. Visitors are now able to take in and enjoy one of the finest views within the AONB that had previously been unavailable due to it being on private land.

From Llangollen, brown road signs have been erected to assist visitors in finding the site. Once at Llantysilio Green, enhanced way-marking has made visiting the surrounding area easier too.

The toilet block has benefited from the project. The gents toilets have had the old urinals replaced with a modern design that uses waterless urinals. The disabled toilet has been significantly enhanced and is now fully DDA compliant. The windows to the toilets have been utilised as a space to incorporate old black and white images of the area – an interesting alternative to frosted glass!

From the car park to the new extended recreational area, a surfaced path suitable for all users has been created to the viewing area. There are also two picnic tables designed to the shape of a horseshoe and a meandering shaped bench. The new boundary of this area is traditional estate fencing based on the existing road-side fence. All gates follow this design too and the project was able to replace some 100m of roadside post and wire fence that had been used where the original estate fencing had fallen into disrepair.

Over 500 metres of new waymarked pathways have been created – one of which leads down towards the falls and the other meanders through the large Estate trees towards Llantysilio Church. It is now possible for users to complete a circular route without having to walk on the narrow lane.

As well as improving access, on-site interpretation has allowed for visitors to better understand the cultural, historic and wildlife value of the area. In total, four panels have been created to deliver key messages based upon the Interpretative Plan of the WHS. For the younger, tech savvy generation, a digital app has been created – The Horseshoe Falls Quest – setting several challenges and tasks for children to decipher whilst following circular trail that encompasses the project area.



AONB. Opening this up will be the biggest success of the project.

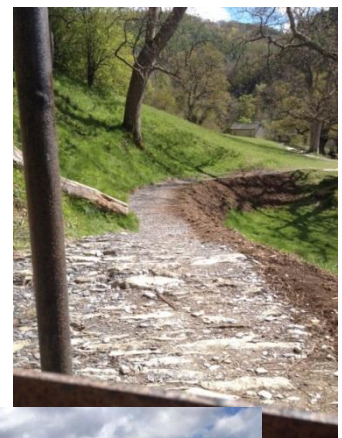
The project has been well received and is proving to be extremely popular. A visitor counter was installed in October 2014.

Between this date and the end of March 2015, a total of 20,000 visitors have used the new path.

The new Estate fencing and bespoke kissing gate at the extended recreational area now, offers visitors one of the finest views within the



Old black & white images on laminate being fixed to the toilet windows – gents receiving an overhaul and waterless urinals installed.



On the lower riverside path, a spring close to the path resulted in sections being constantly wet and poached. As a result, users picked their way across three separate routes. The path was pitched and a dry stone wall revetment built to span this, keeping users to one defined line.



The old, dilapidated post and rail fence was replaced with sweet chestnut cleft fencing. Not only does it look better, but it is also lower in height and visitors can now appreciate riverside views.



The newly created path is part surfaced (sections visible from the viewing area have remained unsurfaced to minimise visual detractor) and meanders through the stately lime trees. A requirement of the Estate prior to the lease being signed was that a full condition survey was undertaken of the trees and appropriate works carried out. This was a significant undertaking but should result in these old specimens lasting a great deal longer (as noted in the WHS Management Plan). New limes were planted along the original avenue where specimens have long since disappeared.



The Horseshoe Falls Quest – aimed at younger visitors to learn about the special qualities of the area

....and located



more traditional based interpretation within the viewing/picnic area.

Invasive Species

The AONB continue to be key partners in the '**Big Dee Day The invasion**' and have played a significant role in planning events as well as delivering outputs and hosting events for the public to take part.

Last year, 6 public events were held in the Dee Valley that the AONB led volunteers, community groups, scouts and school pupils got to work to rid our riverbanks of Invasive non-native species (INNS).

The AONB even hosted a day where staff from NRW came to lend a hand. BBC's Escape to the Country managed to capture one of the events too. In addition to this, Trainee Wardens, working through Jobs Growth Wales worked with Corwen and District Angling Club to trim dense stands of balsam on private land. In total the AONB were involved in over 10 days Balsam clearance and over 100 people came out to assist with events.

In 2010, a student placement with the then Countryside Service, managed to map the riverbanks from Llangollen to Corwen. Up until last year, this was as far as the map went in terms of INNS along the Dee.

The AONB worked with staff from Llangollen Active, who kindly agreed to assist in helping map out the spread of problematic plants such as knotweed and Himalayan balsam.

Over the course of 2 days in early autumn, the Dee was navigated from Llandderfel right down to Llangollen in two inflatable rafts. Those on board were alternating tasks, from paddling down the still waters further upstream to plotting on maps where the plants were growing and to what densities.

This data will be of significant importance for future years and will form the basis of a strategic approach to tackling invasive species at their source to reduce the rate of their spread. It was good to see that despite large stands of balsam, there was plenty of native wildlife to be seen too. The group encountered several pairs of kingfishers, hundreds of dippers, red kites and herons, but undoubtedly the highlight was spotting a young otter feeding amongst the water crowfoot. He/she was so excited that it simply didn't notice us as we slowly drifted by, a real moment to treasure!



NRW staff (from all three former guises) hard at work
Staff and volunteers (including two from a Working Holiday project run in parallel with Anglesey AONB) following the serene waters of the Dee



...but, it was for an important cause
And yes, they really did see an otter!



Sustainable Development Fund

The Sustainable Development Fund in the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB supported 42 projects in the financial year 2014/15, awarding a total of £85,472.62p. This total includes £6,363.64p administration costs. 40 projects were new and 2 projects were in their final year of 2.

Performance Indicators

- 100% of the applicants were informed of the decision of the Assessment Panel or the nominated local authority and CCW officers within the stipulated target times.
- 100% of applicants for projects under £3,000 were notified of the nominated officer's decisions within the stipulated target time.
- 5 jobs were created as a result of SDF projects (Shepherds Hut x3, Corwen Welcomes the Train, Actif Woods), plus contractors engaged in the delivery of 29 projects.
- Volunteering opportunities were created through 13 SDF projects.

Table 1.

Ref YR12	Applicant	Project Name	Amount £	Approved	% of total
CRDV01	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Countryside Grant Scheme	9,323.13	9/5/14	47%
CRDV02	South Clwyd Beekeepers Association	Llysfasi Pollination Garden	2,000	7/5/13	23.9%
CRDV03	Oxford University	Moel y Gaer Bodfari excavation	1,250	9/5/14	12.6%
CRDV04	Llanarmon yn Ial CC	Llanarmon yn Ial walls	2,497	9/5/14	17.3%
CRDV05	Prestatyn Walking Festival	Prestatyn Walking Festival	1,000	9/5/14	23.9%
CRDV07	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Community Transport	546.72	9/5/14	91.6%
CRDV08	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Picturesque project HLF application	1,500	9/5/14	30.9%
CRDV09	Denbighshire Countryside Service	Cave archaeology seminar	500.29	9/5/14	45.5%
CRDV10	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Plas Madoc Families events	1,005.8	9/5/14	
CRDV11	Shepherds Hut Retail Ltd	Shepherds Hut	200	7/5/13	100%
CRDV12	Llandegla CC	Llandegla Notice Board	400	9/5/14	32.8%
CRDV13	Denbighshire Countryside Service	Queen's Baton Relay	361.26	9/5/14	30.8%
CRDV14	Pantymwyn Village Hall Committee	Pantymwyn Village Hall Restoration	2,500	9/5/14	11.9%
CRDV15	Corwen Electricity Co-operative Ltd	Corwen Community Hydro	4,000	9/5/14	2.1%
CRDV16	Claire House Children's Hospice	Excalibur Marathon	1,500	9/5/14	18.6%
CRDV19	Pentredwr Community Association	Pentredwr Village Hall renovations	3,000	9/5/14	27.6%

CRDV20	Gwernymynydd School CP	Learning through AONB landscapes	3,000	9/5/14	24.1%
CRDV21	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	AONB Magazine	2,575	9/5/14	55.2%
CRDV22	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Young Rangers	2,050	9/5/14	33.1%
CRDV23	Clwydian Range Archaeology Group	Moel Arthur Geophysics	690	9/5/14	17.1%
CRDV24	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Plas Madoc Youth Group	1,000	9/5/14	
CRDV25	Cadwyn Clwyd	Glyndyfrdwy Hydro HLF application	598.50	9/5/14	45.7%
CRDV26	Cadwyn Clwyd	River Clwyd Catchment Study	2,000	9/5/14	9%
CRDV27	Moel Famau Graziers	Clwydian Range Lamb Branding	4,000	9/5/14	100%
CRDV28	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Nant y Pandy Book	1,736	9/5/14	59.1%
CRDV29	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Jubilee Tower Interpretation	2,885	9/5/14	26.1%
CRDV30	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	iSee Guide	1,400	24/6/14	20%
CRDV31	Glyndyfrdwy Community Enterprise	Glyndyfrdwy Dee Valley Play Day	250	9/7/14	22.8%
CRDV32	Warren Woods Ltd	Woodland Skills Centre Access Improvements	1,592	5/8/14	23%
CRDV33	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Working Holidays	1,078.23	5/8/14	68.3%
CRDV35	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	SDF Review	1,927.50	8/9/14	32.5%
CRDV36	Small Woods Association	Actif Woodlands	2,000	15/9/14	22.3%
CRDV37	Wrexham CBC	Ty Mawr Visitors Welcome	1,000	27/10/14	1.3%
CRDV38	Clwydian Range Runners	Llandegla Running Trail	1,500	3/11/14	35.8%
CRDV40	Llangollen (Friendly) Walking Festival	Llangollen (Friendly) Walking Festival	290	16/12/14	36.7%
CRDV41	Denbighshire Countryside Service	Pen y Pigyn Access	2,500	15/1/14	100%
CRDV42	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	AONB Badge Scheme	3,000	15/1/14	76.9%
CRDV43	Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB	Corwen Welcomes the Train	3,000	15/1/14	49.2%
CRDV44	Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley	Friends of Membership	2,500	15/1/14	91.2%
CRDV45	Gwernymynydd CP School	Learning through AONB landscapes phase II	1,550	15/1/14	100%
CRDV48	Clwydian Range Food Trail	AONB Food Trail	2,000	15/1/14	10.3%
CRDV49	Ysgol Bryn Collen	Travelling through the landscape	1,420	3/2/14	65.4%
		Admin	6363.64		

		Total	85,490.07		
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Project Summaries

CRDV01 – AONB Countryside Grant Scheme

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £9,323.13p (47% of total £19,848.13p)

Match funding – Private funds (53%)

The Countryside Grant Scheme is run annually and is available to farmers for boundary restoration and conservation schemes, providing 50% funding up to a maximum of £1,000 for individual projects. The project is delivered in conjunction with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) who carry out farm visits and advise on schemes, as well as undertaking finished project inspections on behalf of the AONB. FWAG are paid consultancy fees for this work.

In 2014/15 there have been nine hedgerow restoration schemes undertaken in the form of coppicing, replanting, laying along with associated fencing. 1,760 meters of hedge have been restored through this year's project.

Outputs

- 1,760m hedge restored
- 9 farms in receipt of grant aid
- Local fencing contractors employed by farms
- Trees sourced from local nurseries
- 1 FWAG officer paid to run scheme
- £10,525 cash levered in

CRDV02 – Llysfasi Pollination Garden (Year 2 of 2)

Applicant – South Clwyd Beekeepers Association

SDF - £3,200 over 2 years - £1,200 in year 1, £2,000 in year 2 (15.5% of £20,644.56p total – 9.8% of £12,276 year 1, 23.9% of £8,368.56p year 2)

Match funding – South Clwyd Beekeepers Association (9.7%), Woodland Trust (2%), Cadwyn Clwyd (55.4%), Conwy RDP (17.4%)

The South Clwyd Beekeepers Association has created a pollinators demonstration site at the associations apiary site at Llysfasi College. In conjunction with Deeside College it can be used as a practical demonstration site for the general public and young people.

Pollinators are an essential component of our environment; honeybees are the primary managed pollinator of crops and also provide a crop themselves. Wild pollinators such as bumblebees, hoverflies and butterflies are also important pollinators. Pollination is a vitally important service provided by the environment. 20% of the UK cropped area comprises pollinator dependent crops, the value of pollinators to the UK economy is estimated to be £430 million per year. UK and World Wide pollinating insects are in serve decline. By providing specific education in this area, all participants and the wider family will have increasing environmental awareness that can halt the decline and support pollinating insects.

The association has an apiary at Llysfasi where they conduct training and practical courses in all aspects of beekeeping. An area of land became available next to the apiary which has been unused for a number of years. The association secured this land on a 10 year lease from Deeside College. They have developed on this land the following –

- A young person's teaching apiary, with see through panel to view bees.
- Plant mature fruit trees and create a permaculture area.
- Plant a fruit and vegetable area.
- Create a covered area from an existing dilapidated greenhouse, and an outdoor classroom.
- Create a perennial wildflower area and seating circle.

Interpretation for the site is currently being produced.

The site will serve as a facility to educate beekeepers, young people and the general public about the importance of pollinators. The association is developing links with YFC, local schools, farmers and students at Llysfasi College, to improve awareness.

Outputs

- £6368.56p cash levered in in year 14
- Continued community participation
- Contractors appointed in the development and production of interpretation panels
- Volunteers from the Beekeepers Association directly involved in project delivery

CRDV03 – Moel y Gaer Bodfari excavations

Applicant – Oxford University

SDF - £1,250 (12.6% of £9,906.81 project total)

Match Funding – Own Funds (5.1%), Volunteers in-kind (82.3%)

Archaeological excavations were again undertaken on Moel y Gaer, Bodfari, investigating features highlighted by previous geophysical surveys.

Over 13 days in the last 2 weeks of July, a core team of 16 people worked on 2 main trenches, one covering the location of a roundhouse and the other across the inner and middle ramparts.

Community activities were organised in conjunction with Denbighshire Countryside Service. As in previous years, local volunteers were encouraged to take part in excavations. In total 29 people gave 163 person days to the project. Some volunteers had no previous archaeological experience, and others came from local organisations such as the Clwydian Range Archaeological Group and St Asaph Archaeological Society. Training was provided including excavation techniques and recording.

A guided walk was undertaken to see the excavations, and an open day held on the middle Sunday. A total of 104 people were shown around the excavations. This included archaeological groups and societies, university students and interested locals and families.

Outputs

- £506.81 cash levered in
- Volunteers involved in archaeological work
- Opportunities provided for public to visit a private site



CRDV04 – Llanarmon yn Ial walls

Applicant – Llanarmon yn Ial Community Council

SDF - £2,497 (17.3% of £14,473.40p project total)

Match Funding – Raven Inn (6.9%), Own funds (1.7%), Llanarmon Conservation Society (1.7%), Llanarmon Old School Room (1.7%), Cadwyn Clwyd (65.1%), Volunteer in-kind (5.5%)

The village of Llanarmon yn Ial is characterised by its stone walls. Walls around the Raven, a community run pub, and between the old school room and church were in a bad state of repair. This project completed the repair of 130m of wall.

6 days of dry stone walling training were provided by contractors, giving 11 people the opportunity to try their hand at and learn more about the traditional skill, and help build features of local prominence in their own community.

Outputs

- £11,176.40p cash levered in
- Volunteers involved in dry stone wall training days
- Local contractors engaged to undertake work
- 130m of traditional dry stone walls rebuilt



CRDV05 – Prestatyn and Clwydian Range Walking Festival

Applicant – Prestatyn and Clwydian Range Walking Festival

SDF – £1,000 (23.95% of £4,178 project total)

Match Funding – Prestatyn Town Council (23.95%), Own funds and sponsorship income (52.1%)

The Prestatyn and Clwydian Range Walking Festival celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2014. 3 days of guided walks and events took place centred on Prestatyn, but also taking place in the north of the AONB.

The festival is run by volunteers, working in partnership with local communities and organisation and has featured in The Sunday Times top 10 UK Festivals. In 2014 there were in excess of 900 participants.

Outputs

- £3,178 cash levered in
- 900+ participants in walks and talks
- Volunteers delivering event and guided walks

CRDV07 – Community Transport

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.

SDF - £546.72 (91.6% of £596.72 project total)

Match Funding – Ysgol Pendref (8.4%)

A barrier to groups wanting to access the countryside is often the cost of transport. SDF funding provided a small budget for groups to apply to for the hire of suitable transport to enable them to travel and better access the AONB.

The funds were available to any group or organisation wanting to get access to a site in the AONB, and were administered by the AONB.

Trips funded included days out for volunteers, schools and transport for a day of walking events.

Outputs

- £50 cash levered in
- 2 school visits to AONB sites
- Buses hired from local transport companies

CRDV08 – Picturesque Project HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme application

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF - £1,500 (30.9% of £4,860 project total)

Match funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (69.1%)

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, in partnership with Natural Resources Wales, Wrexham CBC, Flintshire CC, Denbighshire CC, Canal Rivers Trust, Cadw and Cadwyn Clwyd, contracted a consultant to develop ideas and an application for a Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme looking into our relationship with the landscape.

The landscape of the area has been cherished for hundreds of years. The AONB want to tell the story of how our perception of landscape has changed, influenced by the Picturesque movement of the 18th century through to the present day, putting the designation of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley into context and telling the story of where our appreciation of landscape came from.

Proposals for the Landscape Partnership Scheme include the restoration of key features and views to iconic locations, as well as habitat, access and interpretation improvements, community engagement and art related projects

A consultant was required to develop ideas, pull together work already undertaken and any other relevant documents, in order to make an application to the HLF. The application was submitted but was unsuccessful. Comments made by the HLF have been received and it is proposed to resubmit a revised application in the future.

Outputs

- £3,360 cash levered in
- Local contractors engaged to complete application

CRDV09 – Cave Archaeology Seminar

Applicant – Denbighshire County Council Countryside Service

SDF – £500.29p (45.5% of £1,100.29p project total)

Match funding – Volunteer in-kind (54.5%)

SDF funding facilitated a seminar day for archaeologists and amateur cave enthusiasts. The seminar links to a broader project to better understand the archaeology of the limestone caves of north east Wales.

The broader project looks to expand upon and correct the extensive gazetteer of potential archaeological caves produced by CPAT in 2009 through consultation. The seminar gathered people to begin drawing up a gazetteer of sites. The seminar involved as wide an interest group as possible to discuss the aims of the project, gather information and explore ways of working together.

The limestone caves of interest are predominantly in the AONB and the seminar took place in Llanarmon-yn-Ial in the heart of the AONB, close to a number of significant limestone caves..

The wider project will give volunteers the opportunity to get involved, increase understanding of caves in the area and raise awareness.

Outputs

- Community run facilities used for seminar event
- Volunteers engaged in the development of future project aims



CRDV10 – Plas Madoc Families Project

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF - £1,005.80p

Match Funding – TBC

Outputs

- Local facilities and attractions used for events
- Local contractors engaged in event delivery

CRDV11 – Shepherds Hut

Applicant – Shepherds Hut Retail Ltd

SDF - £200 (100% of project total)

Match Funding – none

Moel Famau Shepherds Hut Retail Ltd have built and started trading from a portable Shepherds Huts Style refreshments café at Bwlch Pen Barras car park, Moel Famau.

The Shepherds Hut provides a retail show case for local produce, particularly food and crafts. Local people are employed to run the hut. SDF funding has gone towards the development of the facility, ensuring the hut fits into the surrounding landscape.

Outputs

- Employment created at Shepherds Hut
- Local produce sourced and sold at Shepherds Hut

CRDV12 – Llandegla Notice Board

Applicant – Llandegla Community Council

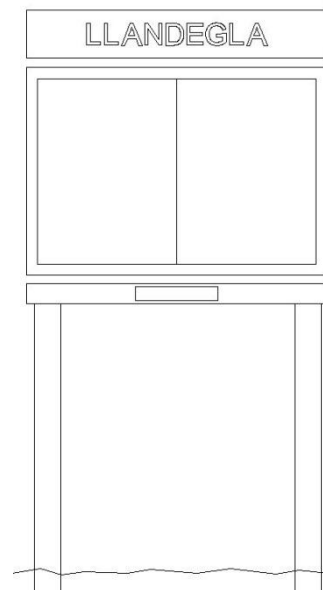
SDF - £400 (32.8% of £1,218 project total)

Match Funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (67.2%)

The village of Llandegla has recently seen the construction of a number of new houses; the notice board is to be situated so as to connect the new and old parts of the village, providing information to all residents on local event, activities, attractions and businesses. It will also be situated on the route of the Offa's Dyke path as it passes through the village. Once installed, the board will contribute to a more connected village, ensuring as best as possible all residents are kept abreast of village information and events.

Outputs

- £818 cash levered in



CRDV13 – Queen's Baton Relay

Applicant – Denbighshire Countryside Service

SDF - £361.26p (30.8% of £1,174.73 project total)

Match Funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (61.1%), Volunteer in-kind (12.8%)

The Queen's Baton Relay is a tradition of the Commonwealth Games and symbolises the coming together of all the commonwealth nations and territories, in preparation for the four-yearly event. The Glasgow 2014 Queen's Baton Relay visited 70 nations over a period of 288 days, and covered 190,000 km – Moel Famau was a part of these celebrations.

The Queen's Baton Relay visited 6 Local Authorities across Wales including Denbighshire on May 30th. The Baton was taken to the top of Moel Famau by 8 bearers selected from the local community. The baton arrived on horseback to celebrate the bridleway network of the Clwydian

Range, before being transferred to a relay of walkers taking the baton to the summit; a fell runner then ran the baton down. The event built on the success of previous events and emphasised the relationship of the local community with Moel Famau and the Jubilee Tower.

Funds were required to fulfil the health and safety requirements of organising a large scale event, such as walkie talkie hire, North East Wales Mountain Rescue on site. Also to provide publicity before and after the event, hire landrovers to transport entertainers, press and dignitaries and to provide entertainment at Bwlch Pen Barras and the Jubilee Tower in the form of bands and singers.

Outputs

- £717.31p cash levered in
- Local entertainers, activity providers and refreshments provided at event



CRDV14 – Pantymwyn Village Hall Restoration

Applicant – Pantymwyn Village Hall

SDF - £2,500 (11.9% of £20,913.71p project total)

Match funding – Aggregates Levy Fund (81.8%), Own Funds (6.3%)

The Pantymwyn Village Hall has undergone recent renovations to make the building more energy efficient and user friendly. The building had gone out of regular community use, mainly due to poor facilities and heating. The loss of income also meant the hall was costing more to run than it received in revenue. The building has undergone improvements to the doors, windows, kitchen, roof, insulation, waterproofing, walls and heating systems and is consequently more regularly used.

The final phase of the improvements was to replace the flooring which currently contributes to poor acoustics, and add a safety floor to the kitchen. To prevent damage to the new floor old tables and chairs were replaced with new furniture. To maintain user group activity carpet bowls equipment was upgraded. In the kitchen an extractor fan, additional sockets and radiator were installed in order to reduce condensation issues and make the space fit for increased community

use. In the hall radiators, spotlights and uplighters, a hearing loop system and A/V equipment have been installed to enable community group performances.

Through increased community use and greater income the building is becoming more sustainable to run.

Outputs

- £18,413.71p cash levered in
- Increased use of a community facility generating increased revenue
- Continued, long term community engagement



CRDV15 – Corwen Community Hydroelectric scheme

Applicant – Corwen Electricity Co-operative Ltd

SDF – £4,000 (2.1% of £193,700 project total to date)

Match Funding – Share offer (97.9%)

Corwen electricity co-operative ltd are working to develop a community-owned hydropower scheme based on the Corwen reservoir. The project involves the integration of a hydroelectric scheme into the flood defence system currently being installed in Corwen. The project will be using the improved facilities at the existing water reservoir. A water pipe providing a 147m head will be constructed to feed a turbine of 49kW capacity; this will provide an electrical output for export to the grid, producing a financial return via the Feed in Tariff.

As part of the process, Corwen electricity co-operative ltd have prepared a share offer, giving members of the community a chance to own part of this exciting project. This has generated £189,700 to date.

The scheme will be of benefit to Corwen community. Every year the scheme will pay into a community benefit fund for the town. It is estimated the benefit fund will be in the region of £5,000 p/a for the first year of operation, rising over time to approximately £12,000 in year 20 – a total

income of approx £165,000 over the 20 year life of the project. This amount is dependent on the final cost of developing and building the scheme and the performance of the hydro.

Shareholders also benefit. A share interest of 5% p/a over the life of the scheme is estimated. It is estimated a share interest of approx. £248,000 will be paid out over the 20 year life of the project.

Outputs

- £189,700 cash levered in
- Continued Community Engagement
- Generation of annual community benefit fund.

CRDV16 – Excalibur Marathon

Applicant – Claire House Children’s Hospice

SDF – £1,500 (18.6% of £8,049 project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in-kind (12.4%), Regatta sponsorship (43.5%), Own Funds / Entry fees (25.5%)

Excalibur 2014 was an off-road marathon traversing the Clwydian Range which took place on May 10th. The event is aimed at fell runners, runners and walkers competing in a full and half marathon. Claire House Children’s Hospice organised the event, all profits raised support their work. The event attracted 300 participants.

This was the 3rd running of the event and has attracted competitors from as far afield as London and Holland, and has become a well-known event in the running calendar.

Costs associated with the event are Branding and Design work and print of promotional material, competitors race numbers, t-shirts, medals, water, food, beer (specially brewed Excalibur beer from Hafod brewery as prizes), radio hire, signage, NEWSAR presence, toilet facilities and online booking charges.

Outputs

- £5,549 cash match funding levered in
- Local micro-brewery engaged in the development of event beer
- Competitors using local facilities and accommodation
- Volunteers engaged in project delivery

CRDV19 – Pentredwr Village Hall Renovations

Applicant – Pentredwr Community Association

SDF – £3,000 (27.6% of £10,848 project total)

Match Funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (72.4%)

The aim of the project was to ensure the Pentredwr Community Centre continues to be an asset to the local community, the wider community and to those from further afield as not only a facility for local use but also as a bunkhouse for visitors. The project and future work has acted on professional advice that has shown what needs to be done to make the center accessible to all members of the community and energy efficient.

Pentredwr School was open from 1908 to 1982 and has since been run as a community center by the Community Association; it is the only community hub for people in Pentredwr, which has no chapel, pub or village shop. In order to retain the building as a useful center for the local

community a campaign of awareness raising has been run, along with community consultation, ensuring the facilities available are as widely known as possible and the local community's needs for the building are fully established.

Professional advice from a surveyor has indicated several aspects needing immediate attention, including completing improvements to the toilet and bathroom facilities.

Through making the hall more fit for community use, the association will gain more income making the running of the hall more sustainable. It is proposed to make the building fit for use as a bunkhouse for ramblers and other tourists, which is a model which could be rolled out in other rural communities.

Outputs

- £7,848 cash levered in
- Community facility retained and put to sustainable use, via community consultation

CRDV20 – Gwernymynydd School Ground Improvements

Applicant – Gwernymynydd CP School

SDF – £3,000 (24.1% of £12,468.34 project total)

Match Funding – Flintshire CC (3.6%), Cadwyn Clwyd (72.3%)

Gwernymynydd village school has developed an enhanced environment for learning, play and wildlife through the development of the school grounds. The project has created an attractive and sustainable school ground environment which offers pupils enhanced opportunities for learning and play, as well as improved biodiversity.

This application was for phase 1 which included improved access to the sports field through a new all-weather surfaced path to provide access improvements and shelter planting along the playing field boundary.

The project has involved the whole school community in its design, implementation, management and use of the school grounds.

Outputs

- £9,468.34p cash levered in
- Continued community engagement through use and management of school grounds
- Local contractors and consultants engaged in project work



CRDV21 – AONB Magazine

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £2,575 (55.2% of £4,663 project total)

Match Funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (44.8%)

Every year the AONB produce a magazine called 'capturing'. Funding facilitated the engagement of a writer to develop stories and news with the aid of stakeholders, that showcase work in the area. The magazine is current, relevant and promotes future work. The magazine has been produced in hard copy form as well as in a page turn format for online use.

Funding has also enable the printing of the AONB's Out and About events programme, as well as distribution of both publications. As well as through a distribution company to tourist information centres and similar outlets, distribution is also through local businesses via the relevant tourism and business groups. This will encourage return visits, longer stays and provoke discussion in landscape management, recreation and tourism.

Outputs

- £2,088 cash levered in
- Local contractors engaged in magazine production

CRDV22 – AONB Young Rangers

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £2,050 (33.1% of £6,200 project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (66.9%)

Young Rangers provides an opportunity for young people to participate in the work that goes on inside a protected landscape, and gives them an experience of countryside management whilst providing them with a better understanding of why this AONB is so important.

The programme is open to people between the age of 11 and 18, and consists of a variety of practical activities, including conservation tasks and access work around the AONB. Currently the Young Ranger group has a closed facebook group which is used to coordinate dates. SDF funding has helped to produce a leaflet template, giving organisers the ability to change text and update the programme. The production of a leaflet will help promote the group, reaching those individuals who either don't have internet access or are too young for social media.

A pop up banner has also been produced, in order to provide images and information about Young Rangers which can be displayed at youth fairs, shows and events. A film has also been commissioned showing young rangers in action throughout the year. This will be used to promote the work of the group and the recruit new members in the future.

The remainder of the SDF grant has enabled the delivery of practical activities and events. Activities have included practical conservation work at Loggerheads Country Park, working with artists creating outdoor installations, assisting with management at Nantclwyd y Dre in Ruthin, Coed Nercwys and Hen Ardd.

Outputs

- Young volunteers engaged in conservation work and activities
- Activities and events organised in partnership with other organisations
- local contractors engaged in film production



CRDV23 – Moel Arthur Geophysics

Applicant – Clwydian Range Archaeology Group

SDF – £690 (17.1% of £4,030 project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (43.4%), Cadwyn Clwyd (39.5%)

In 2011 the Clwydian Range Archaeology Group undertook a geophysical survey of the plateau on the northern flank of Moel Arthur, the results of which identified a rectilinear anomaly with a possible circular anomaly within, which appeared to be archaeological in nature. In 2013 CRAG

undertook an excavation at the site and discovered a burnt mound and charcoal deposits, these were carbon dated to 2617 – 2462 BC.

In 2014 the group carried out further geophysical survey work at the site to try and establish further activity associated with previous discoveries. In order to do this heather cutting was carried out and Magnetometry undertaken by consultant Ian Brooks, with assistance from CRAG volunteers. This work will give a better picture of activity on the site and help to target future work.

Conclusions drawn from the work show two specific groups of activity possibly related to the previously excavated burnt mound. These include two possible circular buildings and related features, and six highly magnetic anomalies which may represent further hearths or burnt mounds.

Outputs

- £1,590 cash levered in
- Volunteers engaged in archaeology work
- Continued community involvement beyond life of grant funding



CRDV24 – Plas Madoc Youth

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £1,000

Outputs

- Local contractors engaged in project delivery
- Local facilities and attractions used in delivery of project

CRDV25 – Glyndyfrdwy Hydro HLF Application

Applicant – Cadwyn Clwyd

SDF – £598.50p (45.7% of £1,310 project total)

Match Funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (54.3%)

The Deeside Slate Works is a scheduled ancient monument in the village of Glyndyfrdwy. The monument consists of the ruins of a slate workings, tramway, waterwheel and reservoir.

The existing archaeology is in a poor state and steadily deteriorating. The landowner is interested in developing a community hydro power scheme on the site. In 2012 SDF supported a project to undertake an archaeological survey of the site with a view to a future hydro scheme.

The site presents a great opportunity to sympathetically develop a modern hydro power scheme but not without significant work being done to preserve the archaeology. The site presents a fantastic opportunity to tell the story of hydro power from the birth of the industrial revolution to the modern day.

Cadw, Denbighshire County Council and the AONB have come together to develop a strategy for the site. Key to the strategy is making a Heritage Lottery Fund Application. This project investigated funding opportunities and submitted an expression of interest to HLF.

Outputs

- £711.50 cash levered in
- Continued community involvement in hydro scheme should future application for funding be successful

CRDV26 – River Clwyd Catchment Study

Applicant – Cadwyn Clwyd

SDF – £2,000 (9% of £22,116 project total)

Match Funding – Natural Resources Wales (30%), Cadwyn Clwyd (61%)

This project explores the viability of Natural approach to flood risk management in the river Clwyd catchment. This is the first stage of what could be a substantial project post 2014/15.

The ultimate goal is to carry out a pilot project which assesses the impact and effectiveness of natural flood risk management over a number of years. This study looks into the viability of such a project.

The approach is to work with nature, and not against it, and carry out more natural and sustainable interventions within catchments that result in greater water attenuation through increased infiltration, re-establishment of wetlands and restoration of woodland. This reduces the rate of run off flow and decreases the need for expensive flood defence works in the lowlands.

The viability report will aim to deliver the following.

- An assessment of the current catchment and some modeling of the catchment.
- Engagement with key stakeholders and landowners.
- Proposed flood defence works; This might include such things as:
 - o The building of small dams in the uplands
 - o Felling trees to slow flow in woodlands
 - o Building of hedges, walls and other structures along contours to slow flows down
 - o Planting of trees to absorb water.
- Community engagement
- Look at potential funding sources for the proposed pilot project over the coming years.

Outputs

- £20,116 cash levered in

CRDV27 – Clwydian Range Lamb branding

Applicant – Clwydian Range Graziers Association

SDF – £4,000 (100% of project total)

Match Funding – none

The Clwydian Range Graziers who farm on Moel Famau common, have been working with the AONB to develop a brand for upland grazed lamb, and a route to market for the produce. This funding is to assist the association with the development of their brand.

Clwydian Range lamb and hogget is now available for sale in a new food hall at the Tweedmill Outlet near St Asaph, and has been on the menu in café's at Loggerheads and in Ruthin.

The graziers have arranged regular supply for produce from within the association, ensuring all interested farmers are able to supply. Animals are purchased by a local butcher at a premium above current market value and then sold by the butcher from a meat counter and chillers at the Tweedmill food hall.

By establishing markets for upland grazed produce, a desire to manage the uplands for the benefit of stock, and consequently wildlife such as black grouse, has been maintained and management of habitats is continuing. The graziers are now members of the local food network, the Clwydian Range food trail, and are working to generate new points of sale. The work of the graziers in managing the heather moorland and marketing meat featured on Countryfile in December 2014.

Outputs

- Continued Community engagement in project
- Local butcher engaged in slaughter and sale of produce
- Farm businesses engaged in landscape management and meat production



CRDV28 – Nant y Pandy Book

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £1,736 (59.1% of £2,936 project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (40.9%)

The AONB worked with a local author Paul Lawton, to tell the story of the slate workings and tramway at Nant y Pandy near Glyndyfrdwy. The book produced also tells the story of the communities and people associated with and influenced by the industry.

Paul Lawton worked to gather an archive of old photographs and oral histories from the community, holding drop in sessions which showed a considerable photographic record which has benefited from being brought into the public domain.

The publication will raise awareness of the geology and industrial archaeology of the AONB within the Dee Valley, and its influence on the culture and communities of the area.

Outputs

- Continued Community Engagement through local book sales and interest generated

CRDV29 – Jubilee Tower Interpretation

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £2,885 (26.1% of £11,065 project total)

Match Funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (73.9%)

This project provided interpretation panels and artwork at key points at and leading to the Jubilee Tower, to tell the story of the tower and the landscape it sits in.

There is currently no interpretation at the summit of Moel Famau or in the supporting car parks that tells the story of the jubilee tower. The only existing panels at the summit are the stainless steel etchings of the view outline, pinpointing some of the landmarks. These were installed in 1969 by Hawker Sidley aircraft apprentices (now Airbus).

The interpretation conveys:

- Reasons why the tower was built
- The construction, demise and recent consolidation
- The extent of the community that it serves and the special events it hosts
- Its relationship with Moel Famau Country Park and its international significance as a special feature of the AONB.

Funding contributed towards:

- Sections of stone wall seating
- 14 etched plaques
- 1 full colour interpretation panel
- 2 interpretation panels for metal doors
- New leaflet and website work
- Installation of the plaques and panels

Outputs

- £8,180 cash levered in

- Local contractors engaged in production and installation of interpretation

CRDV30 – iSee Guide

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £1,440 (20% of £7,200 project total)

Match Funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (80%)

This project is for the creation of a waterproof, practical field guide to the habitat and wildlife in north Wales Rivers and lakes. The resource created will be used alongside activities such as kayaking, canoeing, fishing and wild swimming; however it will be applicable to use across the range of outdoor recreation and education that takes place in riparian and inland water habitats.

The booklet promotes best practice guidelines such as those developed by NRW (The Canoeing Code, The Angling Code). The guide includes images and facts on the habitat and wildlife which can be found in the rivers and lakes within the AONB and also information on invasive species to look out for and where to report sightings. The booklet is relevant to North Wales as a whole but pays particular attention to the wildlife on the River Dee. The resource includes information on the Environmental Charter, a document which promotes responsible recreation.

The Dee Valley Outdoor Activity Providers Group in the Dee Valley was engaged to ensure the guide is relevant to the area. The iSee guide is also a useful addition to the AONB Outdoor Badge scheme

Outputs

- £5,760 cash levered in
- Continued community engagement through use of the guide and dissemination of information to customers

CRDV31 – Glyndyfrdwy Dee Valley Play Day

Applicant – Glyndyfrdwy Community Enterprise

SDF – £250 (22.8% of £1,098.51 project total)

Match Funding – Own funds (49.9%), Volunteer in kind (27.3%)

The Glyndyfrdwy Community Enterprise delivered a Community Fun Day on July 26th, continuing the use of and raising the profile of the old Glyndyfrdwy school as a community facility.

The purpose of the event was to provide a safe space for children and young people to come and play and spend time with their families and friends, during the school holidays. Craft activities, storytelling, games, a Teddy Bear's Picnic, refreshments and a BBQ were provided throughout the day.

The Community Group has a short term licence, currently until October 2014, to allow them to run events in the school building and grounds, whilst a business plan is developed to submit to the Council setting out proposals for the sites future. The business plan, currently being written in tandem with a professional feasibility study, will contain proposals for a mixed-use social enterprise community centre at the school.

Outputs

- £548.51p cash levered in
- Continued community participation

CRDV32 – Woodland Skills Centre Access Improvements

Applicant – Warren Woods Ltd

SDF – £1,592 (23% of £6929.26p project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (28.9%), Freeman Evans Trust (7.2%), Bodfari Environmental (15.9%), own funds (17.3%), private donation (6.3%)

Warren Woods Ltd, trading as Woodland Skills Centre, is a community owned, not for profit Social Enterprise Company. They run a very successful programme of courses in traditional crafts and also run courses for Forest School, families, children and local youth and community groups. The third part of their programme is Social Forestry – Health and Well Being programmes in a woodland setting. Though the 50 acre woodland site is excellent for the able bodied, it is

challenging not just for the elderly and the very young but also those with mobility problems or who are apprehensive about being in a large woodland.

Recently a new centre building was completed, built of local renewable materials with full disabled access. Having this facility has enabled the development of a significant programme working with groups with a wide range of disabilities. In order to allow working outdoors, 4 acres of land adjacent to the Centre are being developed. An arboretum, heritage orchard (in conjunction with NWWT) and new woodland area with a Forest School site have already been developed. This project has developed a small pond, paths and large wildflower meadow.

Funding was granted for the creation of the pond and to ensure this newly developed area of land is wheelchair accessible through the creation of paths connecting the Centre with the orchard, woodland and pond. 110m of paths and a ramp from the Centre have been built, all wheelchair friendly. The pond is surrounded by a high timber fence, with a 2x4m level platform adjacent.

Outputs

- £3,337.26p cash levered in
- Continued community participation through use of facilities
- Volunteers engaged in project delivery
- Local contractors used to undertake work and source materials



CRDV33 – AONB Working Holiday

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £1,078.23p (68.3% of £1,578.23p project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (31.7%)

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB are worked in partnership with Anglesey AONB to run a joint working holiday. 4 participants spent a week undertaking key conservation and access projects across both protected landscapes, spending 2.5 days in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley. Participants travelled from Iceland and Somerset and were joined by Ectarc placements from Catalonia.

Participants were given the opportunity to survey invasive species on the river Dee from a raft, provided by local outdoor activity business, and undertake access management on the Offa's Dyke National Trail at Cynr y Brain.

The work undertaken by the working holiday will contribute significant enhancements over the 2.5 days in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, and will provide those attending with a greater appreciation of the AONB.

Funding paid for tools, accommodation and food for participants.

Outputs

- Volunteers engaged in conservation work
- Greater understanding of the AONB and landscape generated through project
- Participants used local accommodation and facilities during their stay

CRDV35 – SDF Review

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £1,927.50p (32.5% of £5,927.50p project total)

Match Funding – other Welsh AONBs (67.5%)

The AONB team, in partnership with the 4 other Welsh AONBs, employed a consultant to undertake a 5 year review of the Sustainable Development Fund in order to ensure the effectiveness of SDF in the delivery of Management Plan objectives. The review took the form of a comprehensive report of SDF in each AONB, looking at the effectiveness of the scheme in delivering projects, against the Welsh Assembly Government's current targets and output measures, and management plan objectives.

The consultants produced recommendations for the future on how better to capture the outputs, outcomes and evidence from the projects, as well as recommendations on SDF delivery.

Outputs

- £4,000 cash levered in
- Local consultant engaged in report research and writing

CRDV36 – Actif Woodlands

Applicant – Small Woods Association

SDF – £2,000 (22.3% of £8,981 project total)

Match Funding – Natural Resources Wales (20%), Big Lottery Fund (56%), Volunteer in kind (2%)

The Small Woodlands Association are secured funding for a project to build on the successful woodland activity pilot project in Wrexham, which was aimed at improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing for people with chronic health conditions.

Amongst the activities are walking, woodland gym, bushcraft, practical woodland management and nature ID. The programme builds capacity at the local level by providing training for leaders to continue activities beyond the length of the funding. Networks of local organisations and activity leaders, who have ongoing relationships with the beneficiary groups and support organisations are established.

The majority of participants come to the activities via support including the National Exercise Referral Scheme, CAIS (drug and alcohol abuse support group), Macmillan Cancer Support, Stroke Association, Advance Brighter Futures and Communities First Urban Villages cluster.

Funding has been spent on enabling on the ground delivery of woodland activities for people with chronic health conditions, as well as transport costs and tools for participants.

Outputs

- £6,831 cash levered in
- Volunteers involved in project delivery
- Continued Community Participation beyond funding
- Job created to deliver scheme.

CRDV37 – Ty Mawr Visitors Welcome

Applicant – Wrexham CBC

SDF – £1,000 (1.3% of £77,700 project total)

Match Funding – Wrexham CBC (6%), Friends of Ty Mawr (2.6%), Wrexham CBC DDA improvements fund (25.7%), Cory Environmental Trust (64.4%)

To improve Ty Mawr Country Parks access for all, the steep and difficult paths and surfaces at the car park entrance to the park are being re-profiled and re-surfaced. Visual orientation is being improved by means of a welcome entrance arch and direction indicators throughout the park

The existing access from the car park was designed only as an access to the football changing rooms, this was built before the car park was re-sited to its current position and as such was never designed as a main entrance point. This has resulted in a number of issues over the years; the entrance is not immediately obvious as the park entrance, there are a number of kerbs and sloping paths which are difficult to use for people in wheelchairs and with push chairs, this makes accessing the 'all access' play equipment in the play area difficult. The slope on the main path entrance was steeper than the expected standard for wheel chair access.

There are a number of other visitor access points into Ty Mawr. Many visitors now access from the pedestrian rights of way leading from the world heritage site at the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Visitors also access from the overflow car park and the road. For visitors to feel welcome and to orientate themselves within the park, these access points needed good quality signage.

The project aims were:

- Improve the physical access from the main car park into the country park and children's play area.
- Improve the entrance area with a visually pleasing feature leading people into the park.
- Improve the signage around the park to include all entrance points.
- Work with user groups and the local schools and community groups to design and create the entrance feature and signage so that it is tactile, attractive and unique as well as providing good orientation.

Outputs

- £76,700 Cash levered in
- Continued Community involvement beyond grant funding

CRDV38 – Llandegla Running Trails

Applicant – Clwydian Range Runners

SDF – £1,500 (35.8% of £4,191.40p project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (6%), Cadwyn Clwyd (58.2%)

The Clwydian Range Runners received funding for the development of off-road running trails in Coed Llandegla. The ideas have been developed in conjunction with the landowner, UPM Tilhill, and One Plant Adventure. The running trails will be similar to those successfully run at Coed y Brenin.

The routes proposed will be 10km and 5km. There is scope for longer and shorter routes in the future, making the facility one which can grow with demand. It is proposed the routes will start and finish at the existing visitor center and will be on existing tracks and paths. Waymark posts with bespoke discs are to be installed, along with an information panel at the visitor center and an accompanying leaflet and flyer.

The Clwydian Range Runners have in previous years, put on a summer series of junior fell races through the Welsh Fell Runners Association. This project will allow for this and similar events to be run using a route which is known to be completely traffic free.

Outputs

- £2,441.40p cash levered in
- Volunteers engaged in project delivery
- Continued Community involvement beyond the grant funding

CRDV40 – Llangollen (Friendly) Walking Festival

Applicant – Llangollen (Friendly) Walking Festival

SDF – £290 (36.7% of £790 project total)

Match Funding – Sponsorship - LEKI, Purple Moose, Secret Hills Walking Holidays (32.9%), Own Funds from 2014 ticket sales (30.4%)

The 2015 Llangollen Walking Festival is to be held from May 2nd to 4th 2015. The festival is designed to attract walkers to the Llangollen and Dee Valley area of the AONB, and uses qualified guides to lead 12 walks of varying difficulty over the course of the 3 days.

The 2014 festival had 88 participants, mostly travelling into the area. If all the spaces are filled in 2015 there will be 214 people attending.

New for 2015, the festival will include a food and drink walk, guiding visitors around five local food providers and suppliers to showcase local produce. Another new feature is to start walks from the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, Ponderosa Café and Chirk to promote areas a little further afield from Llangollen. The third new feature in 2015 will be an evening of Welsh Folk story telling, song and music, accompanied by local food and drink, in a local café.

Funding has been awarded for help with these 3 new features for the hire of coaches, contributions towards the cost of the food and drink walk and the hire of entertainment for the evening event.

Outputs

- £500 cash levered in
- Participants will use local accommodation and facilities during event
- Local food producers and contractors engaged in activities

CRDV41 – Pen y Pigyn Access

Applicant – Denbighshire Countryside Service

SDF – £2,500 (100% of project total)

Match Funding – none

Pen y Pigyn is a popular woodland site accessible directly from Corwen. A great deal of work has been undertaken in recent years to improve access opportunities as well as the viewpoint at the top of the site. Pen y Pigyn is accessed from the town center via a steep, narrow path which has become eroded by walkers and water run-off, making it rutted and difficult to negotiate.

Funding has enabled the resurfacing of this path with local stone, incorporating drainage to allow water to flow off the path reducing future erosion. This work will provide a more suitable and easy to use path, allowing for better access to the site.

This work is linked to the arrival of the Llangollen railway in Corwen and the desire to provide better facilities and opportunities for people arriving in the town by train.

Outputs

- Improved community use of a community facility
- Local contractors engaged in project delivery

CRDV42 – AONB Badge Scheme

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £3,000 (79.9% of project total)

Match Funding – Participants fees (20.1%)

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB has been working with the outdoor sector in the Dee Valley to develop a guide qualification that will demonstrate a clear understanding of the local area, the components of the landscape that make it special, including biodiversity, culture, farming and history. The course has been developed with Coleg Menai / Llandrillo to accreditation level City in Guilds and is established as a local module for the Green Badge Tourism Guide.

The AONB piloted the course in 2014 with a range of outdoor sector businesses including kayaking, white water rafting, walking and cycling. These participants saw the course as continuous professional development for their staff and a qualification that gave their businesses a competitive edge in a very busy market. Visitors to the area will be given a much richer experience through providers that have been awarded the AONB Guide status.

The AONB are running the courses again in 2015 and have attracted tourism businesses from throughout the AONB.

Outputs

- £900 cash levered in
- Local consultant engaged in project delivery
- Continued community participation through dissemination of knowledge to customers
- Local activity businesses engaged in training sessions

CRDV43 – Corwen Welcomes the Train

Applicant – Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

SDF – £3,000 (49.2% of £6,095 of project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (9.9%), Cadwyn Clwyd (40.9%)

The AONB team has been working with the Llangollen Railway and Corwen Partnership to prepare Corwen for the arrival of the extended Llangollen railway in 2014.

The temporary Corwen station is approximately 300m to the East of the town. Work to engage visitors arriving by train with the town is on-going. The AONB team have undertaken work in conjunction with the railway, local businesses and train users to deliver a number of initiatives. These include

- An official launch of the railway extension.
- An AONB presence at a railway gala event, raising the profile of the town through guided walks and the promotion of other visitor opportunities.
- Corwen business advertising on the temporary platform.
- The development of promotional material and souvenirs, such as postcards, mugs and plaques.
- The installation of new benches on the path between the railway and town, and in Coed Pen y Pigyn woodland, to provide better opportunities to enjoy a short stay in Corwen.

SDF funding has contributed towards officer time in order to continue with business and visitor engagement, and help to better promote the opportunities for visitors to Corwen.

Cadwyn Clwyd has provided funding towards the production of postcards and benches. The recently formed Corwen Tidy Towns teams will be involved in the installation of benches.

Outputs

- £2,495 cash levered in
- Volunteers engaged in project delivery
- Continued community engagement beyond the life of the grant
- Local businesses engage in project delivery

CRDV44 – Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Membership

Applicant – Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley

SDF – £2,500 (91.2% of £2,740 project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (£240)

The project aims to establish a new membership organisation which will promote the special qualities of the landscape, towns and villages of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB for the enjoyment and well-being of current and future generations.

The aims of the organisations will be to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley and to encourage an appreciation of its special qualities.
- Provide a programme of events to discover the special qualities of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley.
- Help to protect the special qualities of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley against inappropriate development.

This project is producing an identity for the group, developing a logo, producing a membership leaflet and publicity material such as lapel badges as a membership incentive. The project aims to promote the new organisation and encourage new members. The group has a target of 50 members in the first year.

Through the development of the group, local communities in and around the AONB will benefit through:

- Being able to show their appreciation of the landscape of the AONB by joining the society.

- Encourage more people to become aware and discover more about the landscape.
- Create opportunities for people to enjoy the area through a programme of events.
- Provide opportunities for people to become better informed and contribute towards matters relating to their environment.
- Provide a forum for people to become involved in projects which relate to the AONB.
- Provide a link to the AONB for people living away from the area.

Outputs

- Continued community engagement beyond the SDF grant
- Local firms contracted in the design and printing of promotional material
- Volunteers engaged in project delivery

CRDV45 – Gwernymynydd School ground improvements phase II

Applicant – Gwernymynydd CP School

SDF – £1,550 (100% of project total)

Match Funding – none

Having completed earlier work, and in order to promote and provide a link to the AONB, a willow roundhouse is to be built on the top of a raised area of grass in the school grounds. In order to provide all year round access to this roundhouse, the school will install a flight of hard surfaced steps.

The key stage 2 pupils are to take a trip in the AONB to visit an Iron Age Hillfort and meet AONB officers, further developing their appreciation of the landscape and providing a direct link between the work being undertaken in the school grounds and the landscape.

Outputs

- Local contractors engaged in project delivery
- The development of the grounds with an AONB theme will encourage greater understanding of the AONB amongst pupils, teachers and parents
- Continued community engagement beyond the SDF grant

CRDV48 – AONB Food Trail

Applicant – Clwydian Range Food Trail

SDF – £2,000 (10.3% of £19,350 project total)

Match Funding – Cadwyn Clwyd (77.5%), Membership fees (12.2%)

The concept of the Clwydian Range Food Trail was first devised in 2011 and the Food Trail was officially launched in April 2012.

The trail focuses on these main areas.

- **Membership.** The plan is to develop a strong membership of 75 – 100 over the next three years. 25% of these being primary or secondary producers.
- **Promotion.** The trail has already received regional, national and international press. It is planned to have a concentrated campaign on local and regional press in the target area of North West England and Borderlands.
- **Developing the brand.** The aim is to have the association of quality, local and seasonal produce synonymous with the food trail brand.

- Business to business opportunities. There is already increased trade amongst members. It is planned to expand the current network of partners.
- Business development opportunities. The Food Trail has provided business to business networking opportunities, training and a framework in which members can use the food trail to increase their competitiveness, their offering and raise the standards of what is on offer in this area.

The vision for the food trail is to make it an area famous for its cuisine. For the future of the food trail to be sustainable it needs a secretariat / coordinator to administer the members, and to grow membership. Numbers of members have almost doubled over the last year, and the food trail has keen to build on this momentum. This application was for funding to be used for administration, to host further press visits, travel expenses, updating the current website and offering training and networking events for members.

Outputs

- Local consultant engaged in project delivery
- Local businesses / producers engaged with the AONB through networking events
- Community participation retained beyond the SDF funding
- Economic wellbeing of communities will be enhanced
- The project links sustainable development with the special qualities of the AONB, builds capacity in local businesses and communities and generates greater awareness of sustainability amongst the businesses engaged and their customers

CRDV49 – Ysgol Bryn Collen Travelling Through Time

Applicant – Ysgol Bryn Collen

SDF – £1,420 (65.4% of £2,170 project total)

Match Funding – Volunteer in kind (32.3%), PTFA (2.3%)

Nursery and Reception classes in Ysgol Bryn Collen are using the theme of travel and transport as their child initiated learning topic during the spring and summer terms. The aim of this project is the use the theme of travel, and stories about travel, in introducing children to the landscape of the AONB.

The project will develop the theme and link to the landscape by:

- Exploring stories of travel in the landscape and how the landscape helps and hinders travel, like rivers and valleys as ways to travel and hills as obstacles.
- Considering historic forms of transport used locally through our landscape.
- Looking at local stories of travel in and out of the area, for example: the arrival of the Ladies of Llangollen from Ireland.

The project will also assist in taking learning outdoors by:

- Providing a wooden storytelling chair in the Foundation Phase outdoor learning area, made from local wood by a local artist, to enable outdoor storytelling against the backdrop of the AONB.
- Purchasing outdoor mats to accompany the storytelling chair, story books and resources related to the project theme.
- Taking Reception and Nursery children on a site visit to explore the AONB and carry out outdoor activities expanding on their travel and transport story theme.

Parents of the children have volunteered their time to supervise during the trip to Loggerheads Country Park, adding benefits to the wider school community. As part of the project, the AONB

team has been invited to attend a school assembly to talk to the children about the landscape and their communities place in it.

The project will benefit:

- 40 Reception and Nursery class children through all aspects of the project.
- 85 Foundation phase children will benefit long term through the storytelling chair and resources, as well as being involved in the process of making the chair.
- Up to 20 Pre-school Play Group children also use the learning area once a week.
- 167 children throughout the whole school will benefit from the talk.
- Parents, family and carers will benefit through volunteering on the site visit.



The project will introduce young children to the landscape and its history, and provide them and their parents with greater awareness and the opportunity to visit and experience parts of the AONB they may otherwise not be able to.

Outputs

- £50 cash levered in
- Continued Community participation beyond the SDF grant
- Volunteers engaged through assistance with school trip
- Greater awareness of the AONB achieved

Projects linking the AONB to the wider Community

Llangynhafal and Hendrerwydd Community Miles

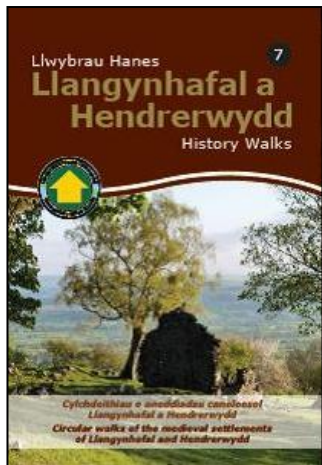
The ethos behind the Community Miles project is to get the local community, the AONB Team and the local authority working in partnership to improve and promote access to the rights of way network within the community. The Community Miles series is gathering momentum as a brand, with more and more communities requesting a route for their village. The Llangynhafal and Hendrerwydd History Walk, part of the Community Miles series was launched by Clwyd West AM Darren Millar on the June 13th 2014. The leaflet provides a choice of interesting circular routes, which take in the Vale of Clwyd, Moel Famau Country Park and Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. The routes pass a number of historic features, including the sites of eight abandoned farm houses, a magical holy well and the striking St Cynhafal's church. The project was funded through the Walking with Offa project and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Speaking at the launch event Darren Millar said:

"Walking is great exercise and where better to do it than in Denbighshire? It really is a stunning county and these new history walks provide a great opportunity to spend time in our beautiful countryside while discovering something of our past.

"The routes help to link the Offa's Dyke trail with communities where walkers can stop at businesses and other places of interest to enjoy rest and refreshment. Those who call by can be assured of a warm welcome from the locals."

This project was the catalyst for two other projects in the same community, which successfully obtained Sustainable Development Fund and Rural Development Plan funding. The Llangynhafal Parish History booklet involved extensive community consultation in the form of memory gathering events to collect stories and photographs documenting life in the parish. The booklet features the map of the Community Miles route on the centre page and has received a great deal of interest from the villages featured and surrounding areas. The production of four information panels depicting sketches and information about abandoned buildings in the area was the final link in this suite of projects, which complement each other and demonstrate the strong link, which has developed between the local authority and the local Community – the key aim of Community Miles



North Wales Cycling Centre of Excellence

The aim of the North Wales Cycling Centre of Excellence was to create an area nationally renowned as an outstanding, all year round destination for cycling and outdoor activities. The three year partnership project with Dŵr Cymru and Conwy County Borough Council came to an end in June 2014.

The aim of the North Wales Cycling Centre of Excellence was to create an area nationally renowned as an



The project delivered the following outcomes, 1 jobs created, 270 km of promoted routes, 60,671 visits, one new development and 13 businesses assisted.

As part of the project a three day loop was established,



the Triban Trail which has led to improvements to some Rights of Way in the area and also the creation of new routes. A significant outcome of the work is a new



bridleway on the western side of the Clwydian Range, which adds value to the current trails in the Country Park and means that people do not need to do a return route along the road. Another area which provided a significant improvement was the resurfacing of the path along the railway line at Corwen as a multi user route, making the section accessible for wheelchair users and cyclists. Gateway signage has been installed at the start of each day's trail section.



In 2014 the projects achievements was celebrated with the visit of the Commonwealth Games' Queen's Baton. A relay of volunteers that have made a significant contribution to conserve the countryside or help people enjoy the countryside carried the baton to the summit of Moel Famau. Promotional material has also been created by the project, which includes the development of a website and a mobile phone ap. The website and ap are both soon to be extended to include outstanding road cycling routes in addition to mountain biking routes. The portable track continues to be popular and was taken to venues across the UK in partnership with One Planet as part of the Mountain Biking Marathon Series, to promote the areas mountain biking offer. Through the North Wales Cycling Centre of Excellence Scheme, Dwr Cymru built an extension to the visitor centre at Llyn Brenig, including the introduction of bike hire and bike wash facilities. Visitor figures to Llyn Brenig are up by 43% following the completion of the new visitor centre.



A new cycle track across was also established by the scheme on the northern side of the lake, which means that



cyclists no longer need to negotiate the fast B road, creating a family friendly ride.

The new mountain bike track at Marsh Track has now been complete. The project was a great success with the development of a 2km trail, built on an old tip site. The project utilised material excavated from the Rhyl Cut, resulting in a saving of £437, 624.

Green Links Coastal Project

Green Links was a 12 month £170,000 joint Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council initiative, largely funded by RWE Innogy UK as part of its Gwynt y Môr tourism fund. The project covers the coastal area between Llandudno and Prestatyn.

The principal aims of the project are promotion of the walking and cycling routes and the green spaces within the project area to bring about:

- Economic regeneration through tourism
- Improved links to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)



- Improved access to Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- Improved quality of life and health for local communities

The project was delivered by a dedicated project officer managed within the Countryside Services of Conwy and Denbighshire, and with support from their Tourism units. The project officer started in November 2013 and has now successfully delivered all project elements.

The project was mainly based around information sharing to both visitors and local residents. Small scale infrastructure work was completed to improve access and promote usage of the Green Spaces and walking and cycling infrastructure. The following is a summary of the key deliverables including who is now responsible for each product:



Web-based information forms the primary avenue for engaging with visitors before they arrive in the Green Links area. www.greenlinks.org.uk provides nature reserve information, itinerary planning, accommodation searches and booking along with interactive travel planning. The website also includes bespoke promotional media including videos and pictures of the nature reserves; for some reserves this is the only online record. The site also contains event information including countryside service specific events as well as general events to improve visitor experience.

Greenlinks.org.uk forms part of the wider Destination Conwy suite of websites. This ensures sustainability of the web content which will be kept updated by Conwy TICs and Denbighshire Countryside Service. The website was designed and marketed by Newmind Ltd with content and layout delivered by the Green Links Project Officer.

Four touch screen information points were developed to provide information to visitors and tourists once they were in the Green Links area. Touch screens are available from the Rest and Be Thankful Cafe on the Great Orme, Porth Eirias in Colwyn Bay, Public Square in Rhyl Harbour and Prestatyn. The touch screens provide information on available walking, cycling and green space opportunities in the local vicinity. The network of touch screens also encourage visitors to travel further within the Green Links area.

The touch screens applications were a bespoke development by the Web Publishing Portal with content provided by the Green Links project officer. The application was developed in such a way to allow additional touch screen locations to be easily incorporated into the network. The touch screens are in a branded kiosk and supported by specific Green Links leaflets.



Green Links has created a series of leaflets highlighting the promoted nature reserves, walking and cycling routes. Green Links developed 7 leaflets in partnership with Illustrative Mapping. 6 of the leaflets cover key towns and areas in a smaller scale with the final leaflet covering the whole Green Links area. Leaflets are available from relevant tourist information centres, some accommodation providers and public buildings.

Links to the AONB include Coed Bell, Bishops Wood, Prestatyn Hillside and the Prestatyn Dyserth Way. The Green Links area is already well furnished with infrastructure including the North Wales Path, Wales Coast Path and North Wales Coastal Cycle Route. Green Links carried out small scale infrastructure improvements including path works to some local nature reserves, adding additional cycle parking facilities and signing part of NCN 84 from Rhyl to Rhuddlan.

Green Links has installed 1 dual pedestrian and cycle counter at the west end of Pensarn promenade and a pedestrian counter on the Marine Drive Llandudno. These are both managed by Conwy County Borough Council and will assist with traffic management; they will also complement existing counters within Denbighshire. A qualitative route user survey was also carried out in March 2014 to determine the attitudes of users of the Green Links route. This helped to influence the development of various Green Links products previously described here.

Troedio Clwyd Walks

Walking for health received a significant amount of national coverage this year with headlines such as 'why walking is so good for us'. 11,944 walks were undertaken within Denbighshire during 2014/15 through the Troedio Clwyd Programme of regular weekly walks, aimed to get people to walk regularly to improve their health.

A new event celebrating National Disability Awareness Day and encouraging people to get walking was held in the New Year. The event was a partnership between Troedio Clwyd Walks, the Let's Walk Scheme as administered by Ramblers Cymru and local disability groups. 67 people attended the event during the day which included a variety of walks, Nordic Walking taster sessions, treasure hunt and the use of pedometers to measure the calories used.



During the year the scheme also delivered a supporting people project, in partnership with Social Services. 26 new walk / Nordic walk leaders were trained through this scheme. The project involved the following groups, North Wales Women's Centre, NEWCIS –



North East Wales Carers Association, Abbeyfield, Community First Rhyl and Denbigh Clusters, Glyndwr Women's Aid Denbigh, Seashells, Mind, Hafal, Clwyd Alyn Hostels and Cais – Drugs and Alcohol Agency. Further training schemes and walks are planned for 2015.

Supporting People Snapshot



Clwyd Allan Housing Project at Loggerheads County Park

Cheryl from Hafan



Community First and Women's Aid, too shy to go outdoors for a walk at first !!!

Now there is no stopping them!! Next stop the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.



Biodiversity

North East Wales Biodiversity Network meetings were held on 30 April and 29 October 2014. Project work was discussed, as well as local and national updates to keep the network members informed of new developments such as the Nature Recovery Plan.

Work on projects and awareness-raising initiatives have continued to take place in partnership with local authorities, statutory bodies, conservation organisations and volunteers within the network. The Facebook and Twitter pages are updated several times a week and two newsletters were produced during the year, which were circulated to email contacts and online.

Denbighshire biodiversity staff continue to be involved actively with the North East Wales species fora (plants, birds, mammals and amphibians/reptiles), including organisation and administration of the bird forum.

A wide range of biodiversity projects continue to be undertaken, many as partnerships with external organisations and volunteers. These include the Alyn Valley Himalayan Balsam project, sand lizard and natterjack toad projects, the North East Wales barn owl project and lesser horseshoe bat remote surveillance. The lesser horseshoe bat-cams at Nantclwyd y Dre were upgraded in early 2015 (grant from Chester Zoo) and live footage is available in the museum, and will be available online shortly via the Chester Zoo website.

It is worth highlighting that the number of sand lizards recorded at Barkby Beach in 2014 was the highest since monitoring began in 2008: ten individuals (including juveniles, which confirm the population is breeding). This can be partly attributed to favourable weather conditions during key periods, but also to the improvements in habitat in recent years.

The Alyn and Wheeler landscape-scale project obtained grant funding from WREN and DCC biodiversity staff have continued to support implementation of the project via the NWWT project officer.

In addition to monitoring associated with the above projects, species surveys for dormice, water voles, great crested newt, lesser horseshoe bats and black grouse were undertaken, as well as botanical surveys.

Biodiversity events were held throughout the year, run by both biodiversity staff and countryside service wardens. There were 21 events in the Out and About programme contributing to biodiversity awareness-raising. The Bionet stand won third place at the Denbigh and Flint Show.

In Wales Biodiversity Week and National Insect Week, the Biodiversity Assistant visited six schools in the county, delivering education sessions for around 200 pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2.

Additional events, not included in the O&A programme were a bat walk and talk for Denbigh Cubs, launch of the Big Dee Day – the Invasion and biodiversity activities at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. Two talks were given to local groups.

Articles were contributed to the Denbighshire Countryside Service website.

No NERC Duty visit was held with Welsh Government as this was not offered during 2014-15 and we understand these will no longer continue. Internally we have held formal Biodiversity Champion meetings on 3 July and 11 December 2014, as well as being in regular contact with our Biodiversity Champion.

As part of the NERC Duty Action Plan, the Biodiversity Assistant has been writing a Guidance Note for other council departments to provide advice on biodiversity, particularly protected species and sites. This is to promote awareness of biodiversity within the council and to help ensure that its activities comply with biodiversity legislation and best practice.

Progress has been made in the management of the counties road verges, with special management of Roadside Nature Reserves being reinstated after a lapse and consultation with Community Councils to widen the areas receiving less-intensive cutting for the benefit of biodiversity.

The Biodiversity Officer has provided advice and guidance to a wide range of people, both internally in the council, and externally. This includes advising other council departments (including Planning), responding to consultations from other organisations (such as NRW Marine Licences and Welsh Water) and advising members of the public on wildlife issues.

Visitor Monitoring in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

Visitor numbers continue to increase at some the busiest sites in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, with a continued rise year on year in the Dee Valley since 2012. A clear rise of almost 10,000 visitors at both Castell Dinas Bran and Llantysilio Green is visible, with the data for vehicles at Llantysilio Green up by 3,400 in the past year. There is no direct comparison available for Horseshoe Falls, because one counter was removed and a new one installed at a different location. The new counter monitors usage through a newly created access point leading from Llantysilio Green car park. Figures for the first six months have reached almost 20,000 and have exceeded the expectations held for usage at this particular point.

Visits to Loggerheads Country Park have increased by 20,471 in the 2014-2015 year. Car figures for Loggerheads have increased by 10,450 in the past year, which is the equivalent of a 28 car per day increase across a 365 day period. Data for the Clwydian Range centre show a decrease in visitors, a consequence of a faulty logger on one of the doors. This issue has been rectified. Visits to the Audio Visual room have also decreased, however this is due to a fault with the software inside the room, resulting in the room being closed throughout the summer months.

Visitor numbers on the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail have decreased in the past year with figures at Llandegla and Moel Arthur down 1218 and 1866 respectively. There is no accurate comparison for Penycloddiau due to a fault with the counter throughout much of 2013. The figure for the 2014-15 year is accurate.

The counters at Moel Arthur and Penycloddiau have subsequently been removed. The counter at Moel Arthur had been tampered with by visitors and damaged by wildlife. The stile counter at Penycloddiau was at the end of its useful life. A slab counter has been installed near Coed Llangwyfan car park; it remains on the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail.

Four traffic counters have been in use over the past year, three on tracks used legally by off-road vehicles and motorbikes and one on an illegal off-road route. The current locations are Llangynhafal Track, The Wayfarer, Allt y Baddi and on the edge of Nantyr Forest. Data has been used in the planning of off-road operations in conjunction with North Wales Police and NRW, to try

and curb the use of illegal routes and the impact this has on the environment. The monitoring of legal routes has helped in gauging the levels of use and to aid in dealing with complaints and efforts by some groups to close these rights of way.

A comparison of the annual figures for the past two financial year periods can be seen in table 1 below. Figures detail “visitor numbers” apart from the last two entries which detail the number of cars at Loggerheads Country Park and Llantysilio Green car parks.

Comparison of visitor counter figures for sites across the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 financial years.

SITE NAME	2013-14 Financial Year	2014-15 Financial year
Castell Dinas Bran	33663	42830
Llantysilio Green	44259	53864
Horseshoe Falls	35460	11624
Horseshoe Falls (New)		19820
Loggerheads	188433	208904
Loggerheads AV Room	20020	10704
Clwydian Range Centre	64661	57992
Llanarmon yn Ial (ODP)	3463	2245
Moel Arthur (ODP)	22400	20534
Penycloddiau (ODP)	3042	16835
NUMBER OF CARS		
Loggerheads	73233	83683
Llantysilio Green	18103	21590