



Bryniau Clwyd a
Dyffryn Dyfrdwy
Clwydian Range
and Dee Valley

Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eiddadod
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership

Minutes of the Meeting

held on

Friday 16th October 2015

at

The Sports Pavilion, Corwen

at 10:00 am

AONB Partnership Members

Land Management Representatives

Sandy Archdale
Gareth Wyn Jones
Sharron Jones

Individual Interest Representatives

Helen Walker
David Davies
John I Roberts

Rural Interest Representatives

Christine Evans
Roger Cragg

Landscape Interest Representative

Michael Skuse

Historical Interest Representative

Tony King

Natural Environment Representative

Les Starling

Built Environment Representative

Philip Durrell

Business Interest Representative

Dewi Davies

Representing Clwydian Range & Dee Valley

AONB

Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer)
David Shiel (AONB Senior Officer)
Tony Hughes (AONB Planning Officer)
Helen Mrowiec (AONB Senior Recreation
Officer)
Karen Holthofer (AONB Communications Officer)
Ceri Lloyd (AONB Sustainable Development
Officer)

Representing Wrexham County Borough

Council

Councillor RJ Dutton OBE
Anna Irwin (Senior Conservation and
Environment Officer)

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillor Stuart Davies (Chair)
Councillor Huw L Jones
Councillor Merfyn Parry
together with
Huw Rees (Head of DCC Countryside &
Heritage Service)
Lisa Jones (DCC Solicitor/Deputy
Monitoring Officer)

Representing Flintshire County Council

Councillor Colin Legg
together with
Tom Woodall (Head of FCC Countryside Service)

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Observer

Paul Mitchell

Meeting Observers

Simon Collinge
Neville Howell

1. Welcome/Apologies

Apologies for Absence were submitted from: -

Councillor Hugh Jones, Councillor Lloyd Kenyon, Councillor Martyn Holland, Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Councillor Paul Cunningham, Mr Martin Howarth, Mr Peter Scarll, Mr Philip Thane, Mr Andrew Worthington

The Chair welcomed members and observers to the second meeting of the AONB Partnership, and introduced Anna Irwin (Conservation and Environment Officer for Wrexham County Borough Council).

2. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on May 15th 2015

2.1 Page 5 5.1

AONB Management Plan

Section 1.3 ("Who is the Plan for?") Relevant Authorities Partners of the AONB; Landowners and Land managers; and Local Communities,

Philip Durrell said that it had not been included in the minutes that he had suggested another section to be added under the same heading entitled '**Other External Users' or 'Visitors to the AONB'**

He went on to explain that the Plan would be of significance to the visitors of the AONB - whether they were visiting for passive tourism or activity holidays their interests should be acknowledged.

2.2 Page 6 5.1

Section 20

Reference to include Llantysilio Mountains

Councillor Bob Dutton proposed that the above amendments to be made to the minutes, and this was seconded by Councillor Merfyn Parry.

2.3 Partnership Meeting Dates

Meeting dates would be considered under 'Any Other Business'

Action

The minutes would be amended to include Philip Durrell's proposals

Subject to the forgoing amendments, the minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

3. Show Case:

AONB Badge Scheme

Recently appointed AONB Sustainable Development Fund Officer, Ceri Lloyd, provided a brief show case (with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation). She explained that, the AONB Guides Project was originally initiated when the AONB Team was engaging with tourism businesses and outdoor providers

located within the Dee Valley. The outdoor providers had expressed an interest in gaining some enhanced knowledge and understanding of the landscape that they lived and worked in. Subsequently, the AONB Team had coordinated a bespoke course with the interested businesses.

The duration of the course was between 7 or 8 months which could be extended over the year. It included classroom presentations, practical work and an assessment for a variety of themes including guiding skills, historic environment, Welsh language and culture, biodiversity and moorland management. The sessions included partnership working with the County Archaeologist, Fiona Gale, and NRW Geologist, Raymond Roberts and DCC Biodiversity Officer, Lizzy Webster.

Some of the benefits of the course included:

- ✚ Local businesses yeargaining an extensive knowledge of the area that they lived and worked in
- ✚ participants of the course becoming ambassadors for the AONB
- ✚ Sharing knowledge gained with their customers

The Sustainable Development Officer emphasised that the scheme was an excellent way for outdoor providers/businesses to interact with the AONB Team and discover more about their locality.

Discussion ensued. Members agreed that the scheme was an excellent initiative. One member raised concerns that businesses sometimes move away from the area, and that it was essential that the course continued to operate. Another member enquired if the scheme could be opened up to other suitable interested parties for educational purposes.

The Sustainable Development Officer responded that it was anticipated that the scheme would be continued and developed further in light of the experience gained.

4. AONB Framework & Terms of Reference

The AONB Officer provided the background to the circulated document, explaining that the original Terms of Reference had been produced for the former AONB Joint Advisory Committee. With the formation of the new AONB Partnership, which comprised 3 Local Authorities (DCC, FCC, WCBC) a new framework and Terms of Reference had been created with advice from Denbighshire County Council's Deputy Monitoring Solicitor, Lisa Jones.

The AONB Officer introduced Lisa to meeting members, and she explained that a framework had been produced which in general terms explained the relationship between the Joint Committee and the AONB Partnership.

The Chair and the senior AONB Officers had met to consider the document and it was now being brought to the Partnership to be considered. One of the principle changes to the document was that the role of the Chair had been opened up to all members.

The Chair added that the proposed practice for responding to planning consultations (recommendations) was that the Joint Committee (JC) could only

delegate responsibility to officers and not the Partnership, therefore all planning responses would be sent out on behalf of the Joint Committee.

The AONB Officer explained that during the interim period the AONB Planning Officer had carried on responding to consultations and associated delegations on behalf of the AONB and the Partnership, in consultation with Councillor Hugh Jones, Chair of the Joint Committee.

- 4.1 In the ensuing discussion an issue was raised as to whether the Joint Committee could overrule a recommendation of the Partnership. The Deputy Monitoring Solicitor said that in theory the Joint Committee could overrule the partnership. However, the AONB Officer explained that it was highly improbable that that scenario would ever occur. Councillor Huw L Jones (Joint Committee Member) said that in the unlikely event of the scenario arising Partnership Members could ask to meet and discuss the situation with a Joint Committee Member and attend the Joint Committee Meeting.

The Chair explained that currently the Partnership was going through a transitional period and once the sub groups were convened, major planning applications would be considered by the Landscape and Built Environment Group.

It was suggested that all three Planning Committees should be notified when the sub group was convened to ensure that there was full understanding of the Partnership's role.

It was queried who could apply to be a Substitute Member for the Partnership, the AONB Officer responded that if members knew of an individual that they thought had the relevant knowledge and enthusiasm for the AONB, and that they were willing and able to substitute at meetings then members could volunteer that person.

The AONB Sustainable Development Fund was discussed and it was suggested that the Partnership should become more involved with the new projects coming forward. The Chair asked that all members consider any projects that they believed would be suitable projects to be funded through SDF to bring to the Sustainable Development Officer's attention. The Chair emphasised that were appropriate, it would be good practice for some projects to be brought forward by Partnership members and for them to be involved in SDF projects.

4.2 Page 4 Point 27

AONB Officers have the delegated authority to respond to planning and other consultation on behalf of the Joint Committee. They will consult the AONB Partnership Landscape Character and Built Environment Working Group on significant applications

A member questioned the phraseology 'significant' and emphasised that all members must be aware of the parameters. It was explained that this would be defined in the Scheme of Delegation to be considered by the Joint Committee next month.

Action

The comment was noted by the Deputy Monitoring Solicitor

5. Appointment of Members to Partnership Subgroups

The AONB Officer provided a verbal update on the Partnership sub groups explaining that they would be convened to consider specific areas.

There would be 5 Sub Groups:

- 1. Sustainable Development Fund**
- 2. Landscape Character and Built Environment**
- 3. Land Management and Natural Environment**
- 4. Heritage, Culture & Communities**
- 5. Recreation, Tourism, and Business Engagement**

Forms to indicate members preferred group were circulated to Partnership members.

The AONB Officer explained that members were not obliged to sit on any of the sub groups. However, if members wanted to contribute further to the Partnership their assistance would be very much appreciated.

The Senior AONB Officer explained that the way in which it was envisaged was that the AONB Management Plan would be implemented and completed by the sub groups in partnership with other organisations e.g.

1	Sustainable Development fund	- Communities - Landowners/farmers - NRW
2	Landscape Character & Built Environment	- x3 Highways Departments - NRW
3	Land Management & Natural Environment	- North Wales Wildlife Trust - National Grid - Limestone Legacy Project - Conservation Work (if HLF bid was successful) - NRW
4	Heritage, Culture & Communities	- Industrial Archaeology - Menter Iaith - Minera Quarry
5	Recreation, Tourism & Business Engagement	- Visit Wales - Provision on horse riding to be considered - NRW

The Chair noted that members of the Local Authority Planning Committee could still be a member of the Planning Sub Group, as this had been adopted within the Legal Agreement.

6. Show Case:

Friends of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

Mr Michael Skuse provided a brief verbal update on the 'Friends of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley' explaining that the Friends had been successfully launched on the 15th of July at Plas Newydd, Llangollen. The Friends now had 82 members, recruited through a membership leaflet that had been widely circulated in the area. One of the aims of the group was to try and make more people aware of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as most were unaware of what an AONB was. The Friends had arranged events, some jointly with other associations, and these had been well received. They were now registered with the Charity Commission with the object to conserve and care for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley designated an AONB and assist in the protection and improvement of its amenities for the benefit of the public, either alone or in conjunction with other bodies or organisations as the trustees shall think fit, including advancing knowledge and understanding about the special features of the landscape and its natural and cultural heritage. Michael went on to emphasise that it was still early days, and the Friends were taking things one step at a time. In the future the Friends could own land or other property and apply for grants for projects. One member had already suggested a possible pond clearing project. He emphasised that the Friends were completely separate from the AONB Management team, and invited Partnership members to consider becoming Friends and potentially active members of the committee. Michael thanked members of the AONB Team for their support and financial assistance through the AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

7. Welsh Government Consultation

Proposed Amendments to Secondary Legislation for Development Management

The AONB Planning Officer explained that the Planning Wales Act had received assent this year, and the Welsh Government (WG) was now consulting on proposed changes to secondary legislation and regulations to implement the Act. The Consultation related to three areas:

- 1. Statutory consultees**
- 2. Design & Access Statements**
- 3. Houses in multiple occupation**

The Planning Officer went on to explain that the 'Design and Access Statement' (DAS) proposals were the most applicable to the AONB. Welsh Government had recognised some of Wales' sensitive areas, but not National Parks or AONBs. The recommendation was that the lower threshold for DAS should be extended to AONBs and National Parks.

Discussion ensued, and it was queried whether areas outside the AONB but within its setting should be considered. The Planning Officer explained that it would be too complex to include the areas outside of the AONB. Other concerns were raised regarding regeneration from a business point of view and whether it would be restricted. The Planning Officer responded that Design and Access Statements could be an extra burden on business but would not hamper any decision on whether planning permission would be granted and would serve to improve design in the AONB.

The majority of members acknowledged that there was a shortage of housing in the locality and they debated how this could be overcome locally with developers in a way that would complement the AONB. The development of 'brownfield' land and the reuse of existing buildings were proposed as possible solutions.

RESOLVED

That the recommended response to be submitted to the Joint Committee to include reference to development of 'brownfield' land and the reuse of existing buildings.

"The Joint Committee welcomes recognition by Welsh Government of the merits of Design and Access Statements, and supports the need to clarify the scope and content of DAS to streamline the process and make them more relevant.

The intention to retain DAS for major developments across Wales and for smaller developments in Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites to reflect the fact that proposals in such areas 'may have a significantly greater impact on the character of the area of higher sensitivity in which they are situated' is also supported. However, the Joint Committee is disappointed that the greater sensitivity of Wales' protected landscapes to development has not been recognised in the consultation document. The committee strongly believes in the need to encourage and specifically underline the need for high quality design in nationally protected landscapes, and considers the failure to give equivalent status to such areas in addition to Conservation Areas and WHS downgrades their importance and will undermine efforts to promote good design.

The Joint Committee would therefore recommend that the lower development threshold for DAS should also be applied to AONB's and National Parks (Q.8)

The proposed lower thresholds for DAS in sensitive areas set out in the document would appear to be a reasonable balance between the need to recognise the sensitivity of such areas and making DAS more relevant and responsive. (Q.9)

The intention to incorporate a statement on design into Heritage Impact Statements proposed in the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill for works to Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monument and Conservation Area Consents makes sense and will assist in reducing duplication when planning permission is also required. Extending these provisions to Registered Historic Parks and Gardens is also supported. (Q10)

The prescriptive nature of the regulations concerning the content of DAS has contributed to the ‘tick–box’ attitude to the process, and the committee supports the intention to simplify content and make it more relevant and meaningful by focussing on those design issues which are most relevant to the particular circumstances. (Q12.)

The Partnership would also wish to draw to the attention of Welsh Government the need to more actively promote the development of ‘brownfield’ land and the reuse of existing buildings.”

8. Draft Site Development Briefs

Cae Ffyddion, Dyserth and Ffordd Hendre/Maes Meurig, Meliden

The AONB Planning Officer gave a verbal presentation and explained that Denbighshire’s Local Development Plan (LDP) adopted in 2013 had allocated sites within Meliden and Dyserth for residential development.

The Planning Authority was now seeking to ensure high quality development of the sites through the preparation of site development briefs to guide future development. The sites were located outside the AONB but were considered to be within the setting of the protected landscape by virtue of their proximity to the AONB.

The Planning Officer emphasised that the central issue for the Partnership to consider was to ensure that any development had regard to the special qualities of the AONB and that any impact on views from the protected landscape would be mitigated.

Members acknowledged that the sites were in close proximity to the AONB. However, they also recognised that there was a shortage of housing for young people. The Planning Officer reiterated that the response was not to object to the proposals but to achieve the best possible design for the development. Concerns were then raised as to whether this would impact on the cost of the properties. The Planning Officer said that the response was not prescriptive and in the main referred to colour of materials, protecting existing landscape features - woodlands, trees and hedges and new landscaping.

RESOLVED

“The Joint Committee notes that Ffordd Hendre and Maes Meurig are allocated for development in the LDP and supports preparation of a site brief to guide future development.

One of the defined special qualities of the AONB identified in the draft Management Plan 2014 -2019 is ‘Remoteness and Wildness, Space and Freedom’, including the ability to experience ‘uninterrupted and extensive views from the high places within it.’ Both sites are clearly visible from the higher ground of the AONB to the east, notably Graig Fawr and Prestatyn Hillside, including the Offa’s Dyke National Trail. The impact of development which can interrupt important views from the AONB should therefore be a consideration in drawing up the site development brief, and the

Joint Committee is disappointed that the document does not recognise that the sites are within the setting of the AONB or the need to consider such impacts.

The committee would recommend that these issues should be included in the development brief. Section 4, which highlights the key LDP policies to be applied should specifically include Policy VOE2 and flag up that the sites are considered to be within the setting of the AONB. The need to ensure that the overall approach to development, particularly landscaping, has regard to the need to mitigate impacts on the AONB, notably on views from the higher ground of the protected area should also be emphasised in Section 5. Site Appraisal and Requirements and 6. Design Objectives. In addition, the committee would suggest that the brief should articulate the need for development to be based on a guiding principle which seeks to integrate and absorb the development into its predominantly rural surroundings from the outset.

Particular issues that the committee would wish to see emphasised throughout the document include:

- The importance of retaining and protecting existing landscape features - woodlands, trees and hedges – which will help soften views and break up the mass of buildings.**
- Recognising that the sites are quite ‘open’ in character in views from the AONB and ensuring that a specific landscape strategy is drawn up for the sites which responds to this by strengthening existing landscape features and providing additional landscaping to enclose and break up views. In this context, the references to existing natural boundaries and the need to strengthen them with additional planting is supported (paras 5.19 – 5.20).**
- The need for structural tree/hedge planting to be identified in the landscape strategy which should be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity and ideally in advance of development.**
- The colour and reflectivity of all wall finishes and roofing materials should be recessive in nature to help them blend into the rural scene in views from the higher ground of the AONB. In this context, the committee supports the suggestion that the materials (e.g. natural slate roofs and limestone walls) and built form of the development should reflect that of the nearby Meliden Ffordd Penrhwylyfa Conservation Area (para 5.23).”**

9. Urgent Items

9.1 Items Raised by member

Urban Interest Representative, Philip Thane

Philip Thane was unable to attend the meeting and the item was not considered.

9.2 **Item raised by the Chair**

Proposed electricity generator facility application submitted by Prime Energy Development Ltd to install 14 new generators near Greenfield Road, Ruthin

The Chair explained that the proposed generator facility planning application had been withdrawn. However, he said that similar types of generators were being erected all over the country due to a 'peak demand' for electricity.

9.2 **Partnership Members being included on the AONB Website**

The AONB Officer explained that the AONB Team had received some requests for information regarding Partnership members. Therefore it had been proposed that a group photograph of Partnership members would be uploaded onto the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB website with a short paragraph about the Partnership along with members' names – ***please note that no contact details would be shared, names only.***

RESOLVED

It was agreed that a group photograph that included members names only, would be uploaded on to the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB website.

9.3 **Future Site Visits**


The AONB Officer explained that the AONB Team had received some very positive feedback following the Familiarisation Days that had recently been held at:


Gop Hill

Moel Famau/Jubilee Tower

Corwen/Pen y Pigyn

He added that it was an excellent opportunity for members to get acquainted in a less formal setting. More visits would be convened with visits to:

 Pontycysyllte World Heritage Site & Aqueduct

 Nercwys Forest

Action

The Communication Officer would circulate dates shortly.

10. Future Meeting Dates

The AONB Officer advised that there would be two meetings held annually for the **Full AONB Partnership** and these dates were agreed at the meeting as:

 Friday May 13th 2016

 Friday October 21st 2016

Sub groups would also be convened and meetings dates would be decided in due course.
Members would be emailed information regarding membership and meeting dates of the sub groups.