

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 2015-16 Annual Report



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

Ardal o Harddwch Naturiol Eithriadol
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Index

Page 4 Introduction

Page 5 Meetings

Page 8 Planning

Page 9 Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley

Page 10 Access

Page 11 Special Integrated Projects

Page 12 Health and Well Being

Page 15 Special Biodiversity Features of the AONB

Page 18 Community Engagement

Page 18 Outreach

Page 19 Young Rangers

Page 20 Offa's Dyke Path National Trail

Page 20 Sustainable Tourism

Page 21 Visitor Trends

Page 26 Archaeology

Introduction

The remodelling of governance in the AONB is now complete with a strategic committee The AONB Joint Committee and a support/day to day interface committee, The AONB Partnership. The two committees have now bedded in and roles and responsibilities that are now clearly established. The Partnership does now have 'working group' meetings to help deliver the Management Plan in the later quarter of the year, whilst a number of familiarisation visits have helped bring the individuals in the group closer together.

One highlight of the year has been the launch of the Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, its recruiting policy has exceeded all expectations, it now has over 130 members.

Loggerheads Country Park has seen major changes with a Planning Application for a second car park being approved. The vibrancy of the Park has also improved with new lighting in its Visitor Facilities, the remodelling of the Audio Visual Room and the establishment of the Oriel/Gallery.

The Service now manages the historical Plas Newydd, the celebrated home of the Ladies of Llangollen. The opening and catering hours have immediately been extended in order to generate further income for the running of the site and extend the shoulder season further into autumn.

The AONB team and its key partners Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire County Councils, together with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are a positive group behind the success of the AONB. NRW are a key player in the success of the AONB, the grant aid received from NRW makes a significant difference and most of this report shows how much of the grant aid enables the Service to deliver on joint proposals. The retention by NRW to Grant Aid the AONB for the next 2 years is a key component for our continued success.

Staff expertise and retention continuous to be a major factor in our success, Nick Critchley left to work in the Wye Valley AONB whilst his successor Ceri Lloyd joined us from Cadwyn Clwyd.

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 area (See Cover), business seminars and work to promote the World Heritage Site.

The Sustainable Development Fund again proved a fantastic opportunity to grant aid 27 projects. It is really pleasing that our investment of some of that money is now coming to be realised in project such as the Clwydian Range Food trail and its launch of the Clwydian Range Breakfast. The Walking Festivals go from strength to strength with a tiny element of money from SDF.

Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB – Meetings held 2015/16

<u>April 2015</u>		
1.	Public Health Wales Meeting	8 th April
2.	National Grid Meeting – Birmingham	14 th April
3.	NRW Protected Landscape Meeting – Newtown	16 th April
4.	Friends of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB	17 th April
5.	Our Picturesque Landscape Steering Group Meeting	21 st April
6.	AONB Communications Strategy Meeting	24 th April
7.	Lead AONB Officers Meeting – Birmingham	29 th & 30 th April
<u>May 2015</u>		
8.	AONB Business Planning Meeting with Howard Davies	6 th May
9.	Keep Wales Tidy Meeting	11 th & 12 th May
10.	AONB JC briefing Meet & AONB Partnership Meet	15 th May
11.	HLF Meeting – Ty Mawr	19 th May
12.	NRW Meeting Loggerheads	22 nd May
<u>June 2015</u>		
13.	AONB SDF Meet	2 nd June
14.	AONB Officers Working Group Meeting	3 rd June
15.	AONB Management Plan – Public Consultation	8 th June
16.	AONB Management Plan – Public Consultation	9 th June
17.	AONB Business Plan	9 th June
18.	Launch of Friends of CR & DV AONB	11 th June
19.	Climate Change within the AONB Publication Launch	11 th June
20.	AONB Management Plan – Public Consultation	15 th June
21.	AONB 30 th Anniversary Meet	15 th June
22.	AONB Legal Services Meet	17 th June
23.	AONB Management Plan – Public Consultation	
24.	HLF Steering Group Meet	23 rd June
25.	AONB Terms of Reference Meeting	25 th June
26.	AONB Joint Committee Meeting	26 th June

27.	Limestone Legacy Project meeting	29 th June
28.	AONB Management Plan – Public Consultation	24 th June
	July 2015	
29.	Tourism Growth Plan Actions	6 th July
30.	AONB Officers Working Group	8 th July
31.	AONB 30 Meeting	14 th July
32.	HLF Steering Group Meeting	14 th July
33.	Launch of work completed at Horseshoe Falls	17 th July
34.	NRW Competitive Funding Bid Meeting	22 nd July
35.	AONB Meeting – Caledfryn	24 th July
36.	HLF Site Visit	27 th July
37.	NRW Competitive Bid Meeting	28 th July
	August 2015	
38.	AONB Partnership – Familiarisation Day	5 th August
39.	AONB Events – Meeting with Joe Bickerton & Cllr H Jones	7 th August
40.	Welsh Government - Outdoor Recreation Consultation	11 th August
41.	AONB Framework Meeting	26 th August
42.	AONB & FCC Meeting	26 th August
43.	AONB Meet – Caledfryn	27 th August
	September 2015	
44.	AONB Officers Working Group Meet	10 th Sept
45.	AONB Familiarisation Day	11 th Sept
46.	Liverpool Museum – Colomendy Expedition	12 th Sept
47.	AONB Member – Cycle Meeting Andy Worthington	22 nd Sept
48.	AONB Website Meeting	23 rd Sept
49.	Listed Buildings at Risk within the AONB Meeting	23 rd Sept
50.	WHS Steering Group Meet	25 th Sept
	October 2015	
51.	AONB Partnership Governance	1 st Oct
52.	University of Surrey	2 nd Oct
53.	Partnership Terms of Reference	7 th Oct

54.	AONB Familiarisation Day	8 th Oct
55.	Out & About	13 th Oct
56.	AONB Partnership Meeting	16 th Oct
57.	Listed Buildings at Risk in the AONB Steering Group	20 th Oct
November 2015		
58.	AONB Officers Working Group	4 th Nov
59.	AONB Fact Finding Tour	6 th Nov
60.	Ceiriog Valley Meeting	10 th Nov
61.	AONB JC Budget Meet	10 th Nov
62.	Welsh AONB Officers Meet Shrewsbury	11 th Nov
63.	AM Janet Haworth visit to Loggerheads	13 th Nov
64.	Helen Walker – Nature Spy	13 th Nov
65.	WHS Board Meeting	17 th Nov
66.	NAAONB Chairman's Meet London	18 th & 19 th Nov
67.	Protected Landscapes Stakeholder Meet	20 th Nov
68.	AONB Annual Forum	20 th Nov
69.	HLF Meeting	24 th Nov
70.	AONB Outdoor Badge Presentation	30 th Nov
December 2015		
71.	Limestone Legacy Meeting	1 st Dec
72.	Site Visit to Bishops Wood	2 nd Dec
73.	Welsh Government – Historic Environment Meet	7 th Dec
74.	AONB Budget Meet	8 th Dec
75.	SDF Meeting	11 th Dec
76.	AONB Local members & Community Council Members Annual Meet (evening)	11 th Dec
77.	Interim NRW Claim Meet	18 th Dec
January 2016		
78.	AONB Budget Meet	8 th Jan
79.	Art & the AONB Events	8 th Jan
80.	Tourism Forum	13 th Jan

81.	AONB Officers Working Group Meet	19 th Jan
82.	AONB Partnership – Familiarisation Day	22 nd Jan
83.	NRW AONB Grant Claim	26 th Jan
	February 2016	
84.	Joint Projects Meeting	4 th Feb
85.	Scottish Power Meet	5 th Feb
86.	AONB Partnership Familiarisation Day	12 th Feb
87.	HLF – Our Picturesque – short listing	25 th Feb
88.	Pre AONB JC Meet	25 th Feb
89.	AONB JC Meeting	26 th Feb
	March 2016	
90.	WHS Board Meet	1 st march
91.	Budget Meet	1 st March
92.	WHS Site Meet	17 th March
93.	Conference Call Future Landscapes	17 th March
94.	Landscape Character & B. Environment Wking Group Meet	18 th March
95.	Launch of Clwydian Range Breakfast	22 nd March

Planning AONB

The total number of consultations is 325 slightly down from 32 last year. The majority of consultations (242, which is 73% of the total) were for planning and related applications from the three local planning authorities, but the second largest type of consultation is now for informal pre and post application advice (64, which makes up 20% of total consultations). This is up from last year. The remaining consultations were policy type consultations (13, which includes various Welsh Government consultations, LDP and SPG consultations), planning appeals and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (The North Wales Windfarms Connection Project).

Of the planning and related application consultations from the local planning authorities the majority, as expected, were from Denbighshire (172 which represents 72% of the total), followed by Flintshire (54, which is 22%) and Wrexham (16, which is 7%)

During the year 12 potential cases of unauthorised development affecting the AONB were referred to the Planning Enforcement team in Denbighshire, including caravans, tipping, tree felling, and advertisement signs.

Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley.



Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley launched on the 15th of July 2016 and since then has grown to exceed all expectations. A small group of enthusiastic trustees successfully registered the organisation with the Charity Commission. The membership of the Friends now stands at 134, which is an amazing achievement in less than one year.

The group has arranged a number of events and activities, some in partnership with others. Visits to increase awareness and understanding of the special features of the AONB have been arranged to Tomen yr Rhodwydd, Bryn Alyn, Chirk and the World Heritage Site, Moel Arthur and

Penycloddiau, Golden Grove Historic House and Gardens, talks have been given by the AONB Officer and the members have participated in activities such as litter picks. Over 200 people have attended these events.



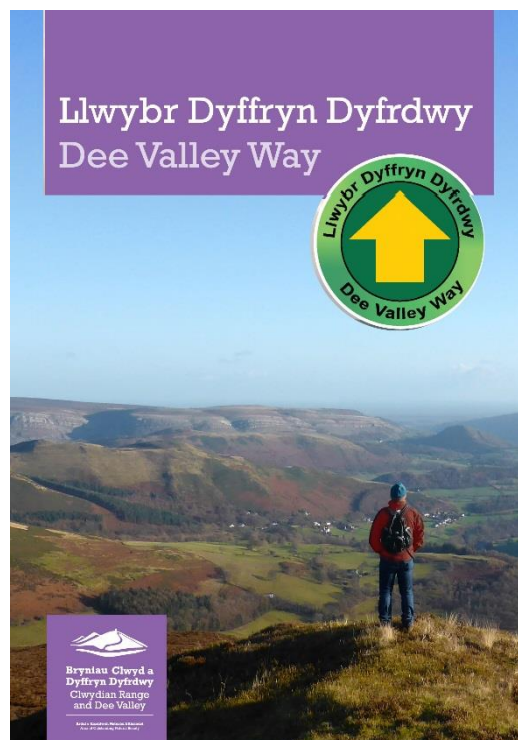
Over the next year the Friends will continue to arrange events, but also hope to deliver projects within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, some suggestions that are currently being investigated are: mapping the viewpoints of the AONB, crash sites of World War Two, and one member has already registered 33 sites on Moel Famau. The Group is seeking grant aid to help purchase a tramper for use at Loggerheads Country Park and Ty Mawr and more practical activities.



Access

The Dee Valley Way was one of Denbighshire County Council's first promoted regional route originally launched over ten years ago. A significant amount has changed since the original route was established with new access areas brought in by the CROW Act. Previously closed footpaths in the area have been reopened, which again enabled better routes to be used, taking the path more off-road. The train has now arrived in Corwen, giving people the opportunity to combine the walk with a journey on the train. The station at Carrog also gives the option of a short trip to those who do not want to walk the full 13 miles. It was therefore timely to review the route and to respond to comments received from users.

Walks such as the Dee Valley Way are an important tourism asset to the area, and an important economic resource. Getting people out walking is also beneficial to physical and mental health, so it is important for us to encourage the local people to walk the route. And what better place to walk than one of Britain's most beautiful valleys.



The ROWIP grant was used to fund the access works required for the revised route, together with the costs of the leaflet.

Special Integrated Projects



A significant amount of work has been completed under the Limestone Legacy programme over the past year. Habitat improvements work have been completed through volunteer tasks, access improvements works completed at Prestatyn Hillside, awareness and understanding work has included site visits, dance performances, art workshops and health walks.

The Climate Change education programme was a tremendous success. 736 children have been engaged with Climate Change education visits, 54 members of staff have been trained in the delivery of the module and the project.



Health and Well Being

A full programme of 'Out and About' activities were held during the year which ranged from guided walks, children's activities, nature walks such as bat walks, 43 events were held in all with 1,352 people in attendance.

A programme has been set up in Glyn Ceiriog cluster with more than 30 participants attending from

the area – the group is now applying for funding to set up on their own. 530 walkers attended the Glyn Ceiriog walks in 2015/16



Working in Partnership with Llangollen Health Centre, a weekly walk set up from the centre. A meeting was held with the Doctor's and Health Practitioners from the centre to promote the walk.

Vision Impaired groups from Rhyl and Prestatyn were taken on trips to Loggerheads, this group has a regular monthly walk with 10 plus participants attending. Wrexham group have been on a walk to Alyn Waters. A vision impaired group from Snowdonia will be coming on a walk to Moel Famau.

Loggerheads Country Park again proved a strong point for Nordic Walking with over 383 Nordic walkers at Loggerheads in 2015/16

Tir Morfa School attend a walk each month with children from years 10 and 11. The walks take in Moel Famau, Corwen, Llangollen and Ruthin.

A Walk Leaders course held at Plas Newydd in Llangollen, 10 participants attended

Rhyl Friday walkers were taken on a trip to Moel Famau, for some this was their first time to the South of Denbighshire

Working in Partnership with Mind in Corwen, walks were completed in various parts of the Dee valley.

Loggerheads Nordic Walkers



Vision Impaired at Loggerheads



Dyserth walkers on a trip to Llangollen



Walkers from Mind in Corwen



The Special Biodiversity Features of the AONB

Limestone Grassland

Work to move the grasslands at Loggerheads towards favourable condition has continued this winter. As part of this there has been a programme of non-native invasive species removal, in particular rose of Sharon and cotoneaster from the cliff faces. Volunteers have assisted with bracken removal and scrub control on the grasslands. In addition 6 hebridean sheep have been introduced as part of a programme of conservation grazing. The small population of adders is breeding for the first time since 2011.

A further programme of winter clearance work has taken place on Prestatyn Hillside this year. In all approximately 0.5 ha of gorse and scrub have been removed. The hillside now has significant areas of limestone heath and calcareous grassland. The feasibility of introducing grazing onto the hillside is now being investigated.

River Valleys

The AONB is a partner in the Alyn and Chwiler Living Landscape Project which centres on the Alyn (to Mold) and Wheeler River corridors both of which are predominantly within the AONB. This partnership approach is facilitating larger scale conservation work on the river valleys, contributing to the delivery of AONB management plan objectives as well as other partners work programmes. It also means the partners work programmes are better connected and more effective on a landscape level. Partners include NWWT (lead), NRW, NEWW, FCC, DCC, BASC. Over £30,000 has been spent through the project within the AONB between April 2015 and April 2016. Work done by AONB staff in partnership with the Alyn and Chwiler Living Landscape (ACLL) Project has included: Himalayan balsam removed from source of River Alyn to trial Hill (approx. 19km). New patch discovered in the Cacwn brook area and removed. Over 100 volunteer hours spent removing Himalayan balsam from the River Alyn in the AONB.

The AONB supported Himalayan balsam removal on the Wheeler by assisting in the surveying and arranging volunteer removal days .SDF funded the interpretation and production of leaflet for the project Restoration of a river bank on the Alyn using natural materials instead of stone gabions. Big Dee Day the invasion event was held at Corwen at Dol Afon which saw the removal of Himalayan balsam for over 0.5 ha.

The AONB have been working in partnership with Age Connects North Wales to deliver an exciting new project ' Perennials' in Corwen, having secured funding through the Welsh Governments Sustainable Environment Grant, the project will have a focus of therapeutic gardening, predominantly aimed at people suffering from dementia. A purpose built area, meeting requirements of the target audience, has been created at the community orchard within Dol Corwenna. A new surfaced path, raised beds and a timber clad shipping container to provide shelter for all users has enabled the project to begin fruition. The AONB were approached to take on the management of this site in 2013 in preparation of the train arriving at Corwen. Managing this area with Age Concern North Wales, as well as the wider community with the assistance of Canolfan Ni has allowed for the area to be managed appropriately with a good level of community input that also provides a point of interest to visitors as they first approach the town.

Heathland

A programme of heathland management has continued in key areas. Volunteers assisted with 3 days burning on Moel Famau which was supplemented with 6 days of heather cutting both across Mole Famau Country Park and the open areas of Coed Moel Famau.

A black grouse survey was carried out in Spring on Moel Famau and counted 20 males which was slightly down on last year's number 26 males. This may be accounted for by poor weather conditions on the survey date.

Llysfasi students assisted with 3 days heather burning on Llantysilio Mountain supporting graziers to in in a programme of management. Llysfasi Agri students and Countryside Management students gain valuable practical guidance in heather burning and have an opportunity to look at the benefits of well managed moorlands. They have also helped to clear conifer regeneration from areas of heathland within Coed Moel Famau. Over 40 students helped over 5 days.

Approximately 0.5 ha of gorse clearance has taken place on the small heathland area at Coed Bell to open up areas of surviving heather and connect isolated pockets. The work has also removed gorse from around a Bronze Age burial cairn – a Scheduled Ancient Monument to improve this feature.

The AONB continue to be involved with moorland management in the Dee Valley. This year, staff have continued to engage and work with graziers at Llantsyilio. Students from Llysfasi Agricultural College and volunteers have also helped and – despite the extremely wet condition experienced this winter, managed to burn approximately 7 acres of moorland at the western end of Llantysilio Mountains.

Upland Hay Meadow

The AONB through the NRW Partnership has continued to develop approximately 1 acre of Upland acid hay meadow in the centre of Coed Nercwys. Volunteers and Young Rangers have helped with weed control. 7 hebridean sheep have been introduced as part of this management which aims to establish a flower rich meadow. Over the summer a traditional skills workshops was held providing training in traditional scything.

Boundaries

24 volunteers helped over 4 days to restore approximately 20m of wall in Nercwys Forest (NRW). A hedge laying competition for volunteers was held at Llangwyfan in February. This was an opportunity for volunteers, who have over the years developed significant expertise in rural crafts, to demonstrate their skills. Over 30 volunteers took part and laid over 150m of hedge.

Broadleaved Woodland

At Loggerheads a coppice rotation was completed with volunteers to increase biodiversity within the woodland. Volunteer work has started on removing invasive trees from the SAC woodland, particularly sycamore and grand fir. Eight pied flycatcher nested in the Park over summer. Volunteer have spent 5 days thinning the woodland at Coed Alex near Llangwyfan. This is a young woodland planted approximately 15 years ago, so this is the first thin. A programme of sycamore removal has continued at Bishops Wood.

Community Engagement

The Community First Officer at Plas Madoc to engaged with the AONB team to work with the 'Tea and Toast' group the aim being to bring them into the AONB to enjoy the Countryside on their doorstep. This project is focused on using the quality of landscape within the AONB to achieve a positive impact on the group's physical and mental wellbeing. It is increasing their confidence to explore places they either have never been before or not seen for a long time. The variety of outings and regularity, as well as access to green open space and far reaching views, will potentially increase their quality of life. In all a total of 11 sessions have taken place. 5 trips organised for the group into the AONB from April to October and 6 trips organised from October to April. These were places the group members were unlikely to be able to access without the support from the AONB but places that most people can enjoy if they want to. The group have enjoyed the trips and keen for the work to continue.

Following a successful application to the Denbighshire Town and Area Plan fund (via the local members), work to make the Wernffrwd site accessible commenced with the felling and chipping of the roadside Leylandii trees. The site has also been secured with around 200 m of roadside fencing. Initial meetings have been held with the neighbouring landowners to progress the ambition to create new public access into the towpath and along the old railway line.

Outreach

The AONB is working with Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and Flintshire Mind to support the 'Step up, Step Out' Programme which provides opportunities for people who may have suffered mental health issues, to follow an eight-week programme of outdoor voluntary work in the countryside and gain the John Muir award. Over the last 12 months the groups have worked on a number of projects in the AONB including the development of the hay meadow at Nercwys, access work, clearing conifer at House for a Grouse on Moel Famau, birch management on Moel Findeg, litter picking as well as guided walks.

The AONB provided 3 placements for students at St Christopher's Special School in Wrexham. The students spend 4 hours per week at Loggerheads and Moel Famau.

The AONB has provided support for the Flintshire Community Growers, the volunteers have assisted the group to improve their access issues and have constructed a bridge onto the site.

The AONB has assisted pupils at Ysgol Terrig to build a round house using materials from the quarry at Coed Nercwys.

The brownies have been out at Moel Famau to help with conservation work and staff have supported the brownies in Llangollen to build a bug hotel in their grounds.

Moel Famau Family Fun Day took place again this year which provides an opportunity for the AONB and NRW to showcase its work. A range of childrens activities and walks took place – as well as demonstrations in arboriculture and conservation.

At Loggerheads volunteers have completed the restoration of a set of original mine trucks which are a key part of the heritage interpretation for the park.

Young Rangers

The Young Rangers in the Clwydian Range continues to grow. A programme of activities has been published for the summer and winter months. Activities have included woodland skills, dormouse monitoring, and bird box construction.

The successful Young Rangers model in the Clwydian Range has been replicated into the Dee Valley.

Dee Valley Young Rangers was launched in February 2016 with the publication of a Summer programme of events. There are already 8 Dee Valley Young Rangers and activities have already included assisting in the gardens at Plas Newydd and animal welfare at Ty Mawr Country Park.

Offa's Dyke Path National Path Trail

Work has taken place on the moorland at Cynr y Brain. A stone path has been created to protect the Bronze Age Barrow near the road at World's End and improve this section of trail. Stone slabs were used to create a 65m diversion around the barrow with heather brash placed below the stone. Approximately 20m of Trail has also been stone pitched in order to protect the barrow. A section of old sleepers have also been replaced.

Contractors spent two days repairing the revetment of the trail as it meanders across the scree slopes. The path here crosses a Geological Conservation Review Site.

A programme of finger post replacement has been undertaken particular attention has been replacing fingerposts on the section of trail between Bodfari and Tremeirchion. Contractors have replaced sections of rotten steps leading off the road north of Moel Y Gaer and along the boundary of the Hillfort. They also added a 10m section of steps on an adjacent steep, slippery bank.



Sustainable Tourism.

The AONB has been working with a number of tourism business groups to support their activity. The AONB has supported the Edeyrnion Business Group in the Corwen area to produce a sense of place toolkit. A number of workshops have taken place to raise awareness of the special character and features in this part of the AONB. This has been developed into a single toolkit for businesses providing key descriptive text and marketing values. A launch event was held in the Spring with over 30 businesses attending.

Support has been given to the Clwydian Range Food Trail Group to develop a "Clwydian Range Breakfast". A range of locally produced ingredients have been sourced and are being promoted to B&Bs, cafes and other hospitality businesses as a concept of a Clwydian Range Breakfast. A launch event was held at Loggerheads Country Park – with cooking demonstrations and meet the producers' sessions. Over 50 businesses attended.

Author Howard Sutcliffe 09/06/2016 18:10:22

AONB Guide Badge

Eight businesses qualified and achieved the AONB Guide Badge this year. 7 Sessions were attended throughout the year covering a range of subjects that capture some of the special qualities of the AONB. A combination of classroom sessions and field trips covered the historic environment, biodiversity, geology, farming and agriculture, heathlands and Welsh language and culture. The course includes an assessment session and the successful candidates were



awarded their guide badges by Deputy Minister for Culture Sport and Tourism, Ken Skates AM. A further 10 candidates are enrolled on this year's course.

Visitor Trends in Denbighshire (Spotlight on AONB)

There has been a continuation in upward trends in visits to countryside sites in recent years, with 690,719 (0.69 million) visits to Countryside Sites in Denbighshire recorded in the 2015-16 financial year. There are year on year site comparisons available, however, fluctuations arise from the addition or removal of counters and the impacts of vandalism or faults in counter equipment.

This year the Countryside Service has been monitoring 5 bike, 11 people, 2 car and 4 traffic counters around the county. There have been issues with a small number of counters at differing times of the year due to faulty loggers, but generally accurate data is being collected.

A considerable increase in visits to sites in the Dee Valley has been measured in the past five years, it is estimated this is due to the extension of the Clwydian Range AONB to include the Dee Valley in November 2011 and the award of World Heritage Site status to the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and canal.

Of note are the comparison figures for Castell Dinas Bran and Llantysilio Green Car Park. Recent access improvement works between Llantysilio Green car park and Horseshoe Falls in Llangollen has directly resulted in a huge increase in visitor numbers to the falls, with 107,707 visitors recorded using the new access point in the 2015-16 financial year.

Other flagship sites, including Loggerheads have seen increases in visitor numbers, with an estimated 250,000 visitors to Loggerheads in the past year. In contrast, visitor numbers on Offa's Dyke Path National Trail appear to be in decline across the county, it is unclear if this is a trend across the length of the trail.

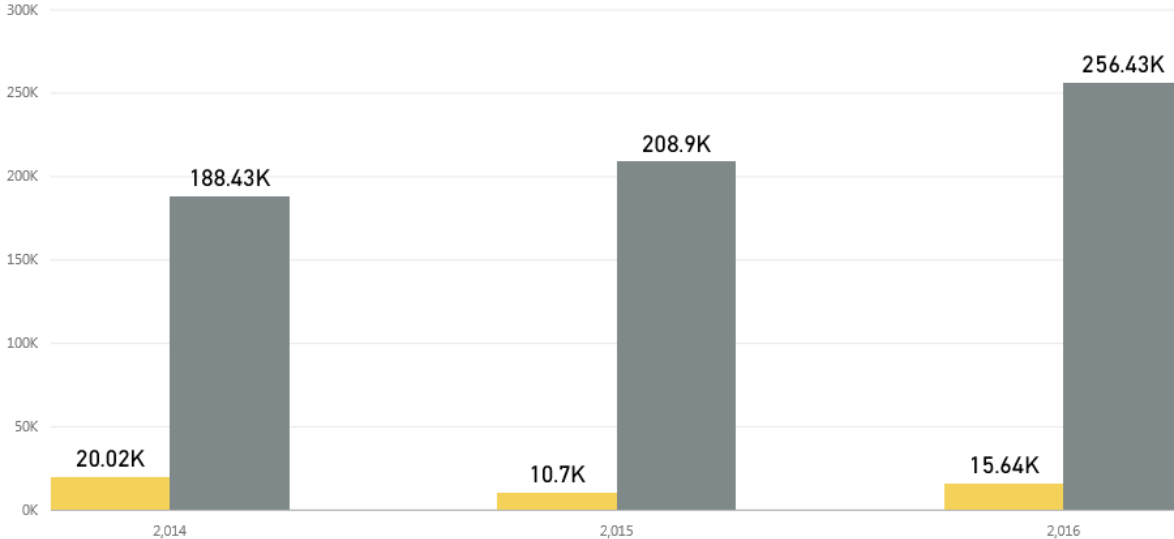
Mountain Bike numbers have seen a steady increase, in line with wider surveys estimating a rise in participation and the economic value of the sport in Wales. The Llandegla mountain Bike Forest Red counter shows a slight decline, due to logger error, however visitor figures gathered by One Planet Adventure show very little difference in visitor numbers in the past two years (within around 5 visits).

Examination of the visitor data from the Loggerheads site shows an increase in the general visitor numbers at the same time as an increase in the use of the AV room compared to 2015.

Loggerheads

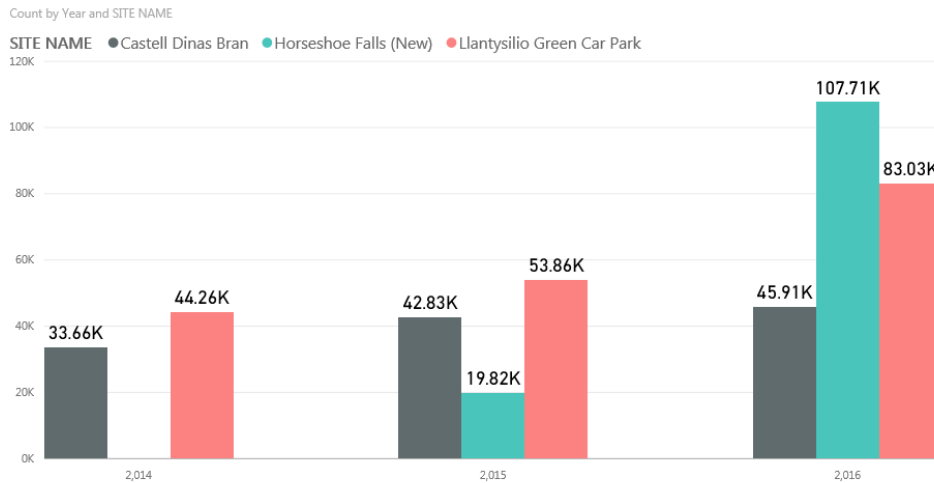
Count by Year and SITE NAME

SITE NAME ● Loggerheads AV Room ● Loggerheads Car Park



Sites in the Dee Valley also recorded increases in visitors. A replacement counter was installed at Horseshoe Falls for 2015, unfortunately the 2014 data is not available for comparison.

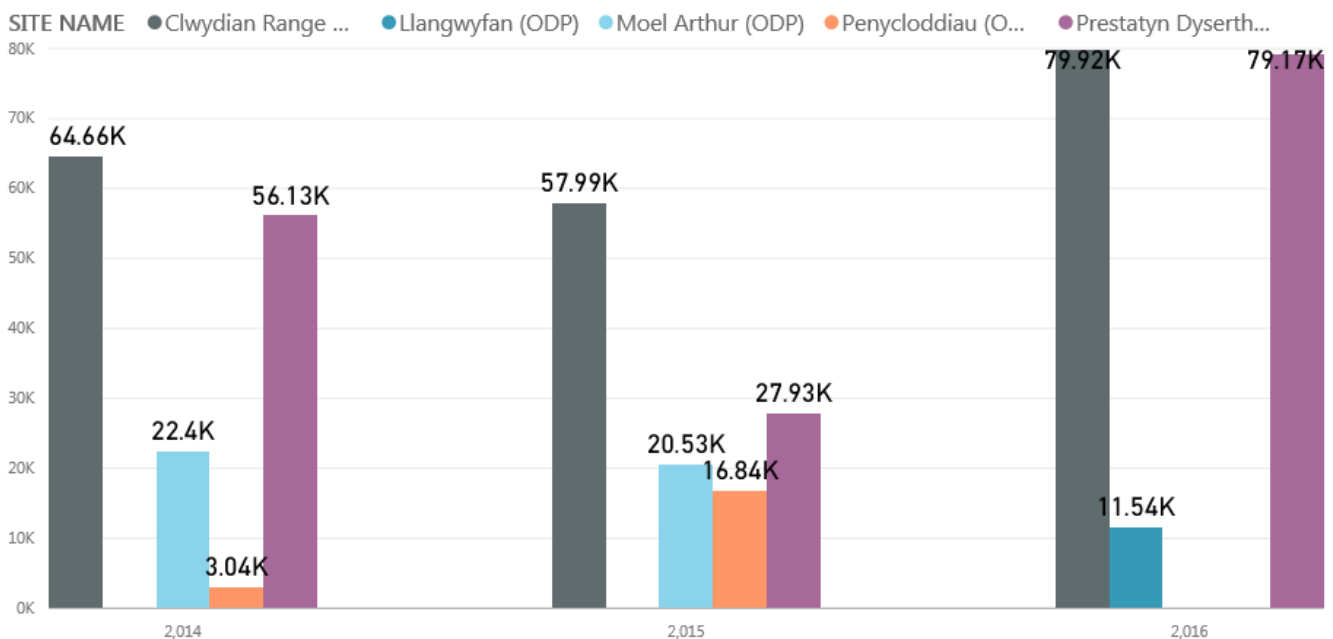
Dee Valley



At the sites along the Clwydian Range there were high levels of visitors for the Cwydian Range Centre and for Prestatyn Dyserth Way. The counter at Llangwyfan is new so no trend data is available and counters at Moel Arthur and Penycloddiau have been discontinued.

Clwydian Range

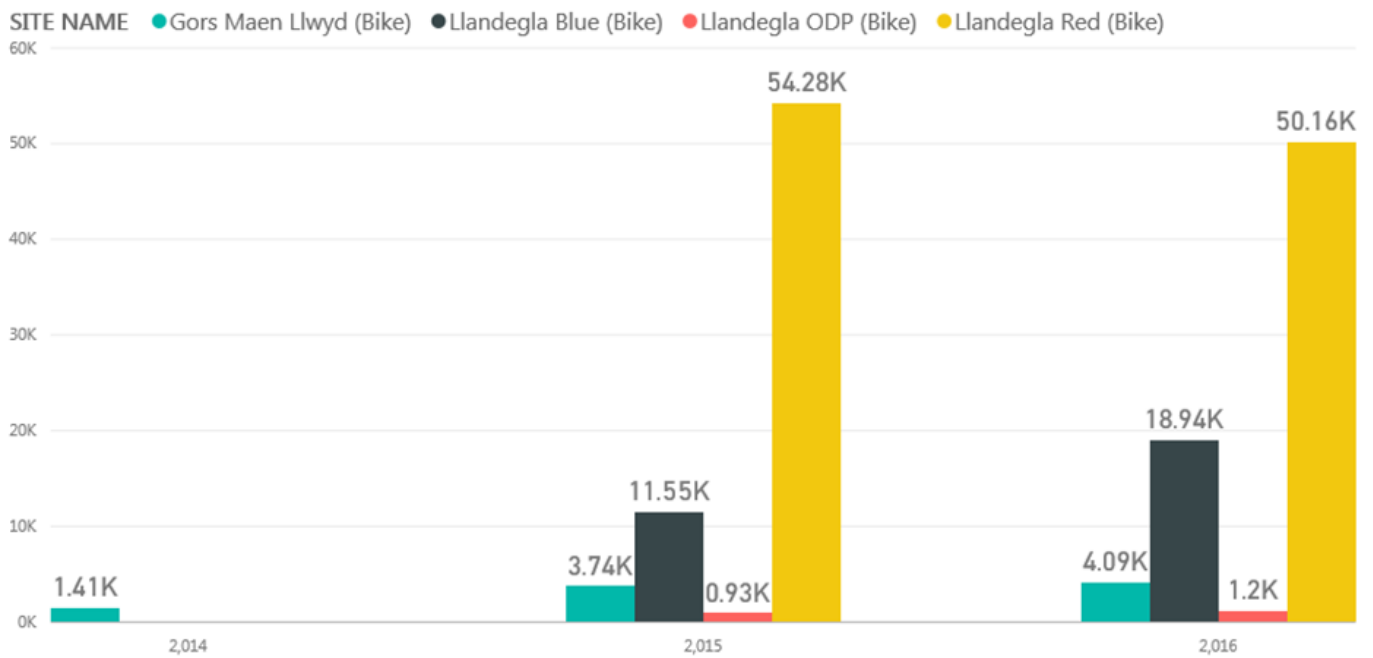
Count by Year and SITE NAME



Data from the Mounting Biking sites show an overall increase in Llandegla when all routs are considered and an increase at Gors Maen Llwyd.

Mountain Biking Sits at Llandegla and Hiraethog

Count by Year and SITE NAME



SITE NAME	2013-14 Financial Year	2014-15 Financial year	2015-16 Financial Year
Castell Dinas Bran	33663	42830	45905
Llantysilio Green Car Park	44259	53864	83033
Horseshoe Falls (New)		19820	107707
Loggerheads Car Park	188433	208904	256430
Loggerheads AV Room	20020	10704	15638
Clwydian Range Centre	64661	57992	79918
Llanarmon yn Ial (ODP)	3463	2245	1749
Llangwyfan (ODP)			11544
Gronant Dunes (WCP)	39427	38445	16829
Prestatyn Dyserth Way	56126	27929	79166
Brickfield Pond	64320	35713	
Mount Wood			13974
TOTALS	514372	498446	711893
Llandegla Blue (Bike)		11551	18942
Llandegla Red (Bike)		54281	50155
Llandegla ODP (Bike)		931	1196
Gors Maen Llwyd (Bike)	1412	3743	4089
TOTALS (including bikes)	515784	568952	786275
NUMBER OF CARS			
Loggerheads	73233	83683	102572
Llantysilio Green	18103	21590	33213

Archaeology

The Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, with funding from Cadw, have carried out survey work including a topographical and geophysical survey at the site of Tomen y Rhodwydd, Llandegla, a Motte and Bailey Castle and scheduled ancient monument. Through help from local volunteers and students from Llysfasi agricultural college (Coleg Cambria) the site has been cleared of scrub and trees which had been masking the shape of the site. Extensive gorse has been removed across the site, except in the area of a badger sett. Work has been carried out with advice from DCC's Ecologist and NRW. Linked in to this there is an SDF project which will bring about permissive access to the site, improvements to hedgerows and the installation of some small interpretation panels at the entrance to the site. The interpretation includes reconstruction drawings which have been developed using the topographical and geophysical survey results. A small amount of work is continuing in 2016/17. The Castle Studies group, a UK wide group visited the site in April 2015.

Gop cairn (scheduled ancient monument) is the second largest prehistoric earthwork in the UK, second only to Silbury Hill in southern England. It is a massive mound on top of Gop Hill. There were some excavations at the site in the late Victorian period when it was thought that it may be a large burial cairn or chambered cairn dating to the Neolithic period. It is still thought to date to this period because although burials were not found in the mound, they were found in the cave below. In 2014 the site became a SSSI as well as a SAM. It had become very overgrown with scrub which is bad from both the archaeological and the natural environment perspective. With a 100% grant from Cadw, extensive and sensitive clearance took place on the site, such that you can now see the profile of the site much more clearly. NRW have at the same time negotiated a management agreement with the owner of the site such that it will be trimmed in future so will remain an open grassland site. It is hoped to link in, via the Limestone Legacy project, a circular walk which will take in Gop Cairn. It is hoped that a 3d drone survey will be completed at the site soon.

As part of a caves project funded by Cadw and carried out by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust survey work had been undertaken which identified several cave sites to be examined in order to seek evidence for human, particularly Neolithic evidence. One of the caves examined was Ogof Colomendy in Loggerheads Country Park. The Trust organised the excavation and DCS organised public visits to see the excavations. This project too will continue into 2016/17.

Excavations continued for the 4th year at a site on the eastern ramparts of Penycloddiau hillfort. The excavation is directed by Dr Rachel Pope a lecturer at Liverpool University and is run as a training excavations for students. The construction of the rampart was finally identified as a dry stone wall about 4metres wide in its original format. Excavations are also taking place on the

site of a platform which is possibly the site of an Iron Age house within the hillfort. The excavators are able to attract academics from a wide range of backgrounds to use new techniques on the site. In the summer of 2015 archaeologists from the Museum of London conducted a drone survey in order to produce 3d plans of the site. The County Archaeologist organised open day visits to the site for members of the public. Work will continue in the summer of 2016.

Archaeologists from Oxford continued their excavations at Moel y Gaer hillfort, Bodfari. This site is on private land and not normally open to the public. Excavations continued on the site of a house and across the massive ramparts which are made up of an extremely well-constructed drystone wall, in at least 3 phases. Two artists, Simon Callery and Stefan Gant are working with the excavators producing artworks which link in to the archaeology. There was an exhibition in West London in the autumn of 2015 of Simon Callery's work. The County Archaeologist organised open days and walks to the site for members of the public so that they can find out what has been taking place.

The WREN Heritage Fund was applied to in order to carry out reconsolidation work at an arch at castell Dinas Brân Llangollen. In the 1990s and 2000s there was a programme of reconsolidation at the castle and one arch fell out with this programme of work. This project addressed this and reconsolidated the masonry. As well as repointing, large steel rods were put into the fabric to pin it into the bedrock to prevent further damage and to extend the life of the ruin. The whole site has now undergone reconsolidation. Castell Dinas Bran is both a scheduled monument and also a Site of Special Scientific Interest.