

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

Minutes of the Meeting  
held on  
Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2016  
at  
The Council Chamber, Prestatyn  
at 10:00 am

## AONB Partnership Members

### Representing Land Management

Gareth Wyn Jones  
Sharron Jones

### Individual Interest

Helen Walker  
John I Roberts

### Representing Rural Interest

Christine Evans  
Roger Cragg

### Representing Landscape Interest

Michael Skuse  
(SDF Working Group Chair)

### Representing Historical Interest

Tony King

### Representing the Natural Environment

Les Starling

### Representing the Built Environment

Philip Durrell

### Representing Business Interest

Dewi Davies

### Representing Access and Recreation

Andrew Worthington OBE (Chair)

Meeting Observer – Welsh Translator

## Representing Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer)  
David Shiel (Assistant AONB Officer)  
Tony Hughes (AONB Planning Officer)  
Karen Holthofer (AONB Communications Officer)  
Ceri Lloyd (AONB Sustainable Development Officer)

## Representing Wrexham County Borough Council

Councillor Hugh Jones  
(Chair of the AONB Joint Committee)  
Councillor RJ Dutton OBE  
Councillor Lloyd Kenyon  
Anna Irwin (Senior Conservation and Environment Officer)

## Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillor Merfyn Parry  
Councillor Martyn Holland (Chair of the  
Landscape Character & Built Environment Working Group)  
together with  
Huw Rees (Head of DCC Countryside & Heritage Service)

## Representing Flintshire County Council

Councillor Paul Cunningham (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Colin Legg

together with

Tom Woodall  
(Head of FCC Countryside Service & ROW)

## Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Observer

Paul Mitchell

## Representing North Wales Wildlife Trust

Amy Green  
(Alun & Chwiler Living Landscape project Officer)

Apologies for Absence were submitted from: - Cllr Carolyn Thomas, Cllr Huw L Jones, Cllr Ian Roberts, Cllr Stuart Davies, David Davies, Helen Mrowiec, Ian Papworth, Sandy Archdale

Welcome

The AONB Officer opened the meeting and welcomed members to the Summer meeting of the Partnership.

1. Appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership for 2016/17

The AONB Officer explained that the Chair was appointed annually, and it was now time to elect a new Chair for 2016/17. Cllr Stuart Davies was the current Chair, but was unable to attend today's meeting. The AONB Officer said that the position of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership was open to any serving member of the Partnership, and would have key roles in championing the AONB. Discussion ensued. Members were supportive of the suggestion that the role of the Chair should alternate between an elected and non-elected members.

Mr P Durrell said that it was his understanding that one of the roles of the Chair was to represent the Partnership's views to the Joint Committee and enquired whether this would continue with a non-elected member. The Chair of the Joint Committee, Councillor Hugh Jones, responded that it would, and he would invite the newly appointed Chair to all Joint Committee Meetings.

The AONB Officer asked members for nominations for Chair of the Partnership.

Mr John Roberts proposed Mr Andrew Worthington OBE, and noted Andrew's extensive knowledge and wealth of experience in the Leisure and Tourism industry.

This was seconded by Councillor Paul Cunningham.

No other members were nominated.

RESOLVED

It was unanimously resolved that Mr Andrew Worthington OBE be appointed Chair of the Partnership for 2016/17.

Mr Worthington said that it was a real privilege to be given the role of the Chair of the Partnership, and went on to explain that he had gained over 40 years' experience working in the leisure and tourism industry and had a passion for the area as a result of his personal interests in hill walking and fell running. He was now eager to bring his experience and enthusiasm to the AONB Partnership.

The Chair said that the AONB Team operated effectively and conscientiously within the limited resources that they had. He was looking forward to working with both the Partnership Members, and the AONB Team.

The AONB Officer then asked for nominations for the Vice Chair for the Partnership.

Mr John Roberts proposed Councillor Paul Cunningham, and this was seconded by Mr P Durrell. Councillor Cunningham accepted the nomination.

RESOLVED

It was unanimously resolved that Councillor Paul Cunningham be appointed the Vice Chair of the Partnership for 2016/17

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on October 16<sup>th</sup> 2015

RESOLVED

That the minutes be received and approved as a correct record of the meeting.

3. Membership Update

The AONB Officer explained that two vacant seats had become available on the Partnership:

3.1 Vacancy One - Urban Member (for the Northern area of the AONB)

Due to other commitments, Mr Peter Scarll had resigned from the Partnership. The vacant seat had been advertised in the Denbighshire Free Press and Town and Community Councils had also been informed. The vacancy had also published on the AONB website and via social media. Nine applicants had applied in total, and after consultation with the Joint Committee, Ian Papworth had been appointed. Mr Papworth was formerly a Chief Inspector with North Wales Police.

3.2 Vacancy Two -Urban Member (Dee Valley and World Heritage Site)

Due to relocation, Mr Phillip Thane had resigned from the Partnership. An Advert for the vacancy had been published in the Denbighshire Free Press and the Wrexham Leader. The World Heritage Site Board, Town and Community Councils had also been informed. The vacancy was also published on the AONB website and via social media.

There had been a lot of interest in the vacancy, the closing date for applicants was June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The AONB Officer explained that due to the geographical spread of the AONB, he was trying to ensure that all the regions were fairly represented.

3. Presentation: Alyn & Chwiler Living Landscape Project

North Wales Wildlife Trust Project Officer, Amy Green, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation provided a detailed and concise overview of the project. She explained that the Living Landscape Project area covered the upper river Alun and river Chwiler valleys, including areas within the AONB. The project area had been identified as a biodiversity hotspot years ago by local environmental bodies and individuals.

The project was a partnership involving: Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB, North East Wales Wildlife, NRW, BASC, Flintshire County Council and Denbighshire County Council. The majority of landowners had positively engaged with the project. Some funding had been obtained from WREN and Dwr Cymru to fund the project for 3 years (until November 2017), when more funding would be sought to continue the project. AONB SDF funding had contributed to the project to produce information leaflets and banner stands for use at events. Volunteer days had also been held in conjunction with the AONB and other partners. The Project Officer emphasised that partnership working was an integral part of the project.

Several protected/rare species were present in the project area including but not limited to; Dormouse, Lesser Horseshoe bats, Great crested newts, Deptford Pink, black poplar.

The Project Officer highlighted Case Studies of habitat improvements which had taken place so far; one in Bodfari, where vegetation had been reinstated which helped to sustain habitat for the Water Voles. Another in Llanarmon yn Ial, in an area of flat land that was transformed into a pond which would now provide habitat for a number of species.

Himalayan Balsam was a problem and a lot of volunteer days had been completed with more planned. Mink were also a problem and mink control training was being completed.

The Project Officer had joined the AONB Team in participating in shows and events, volunteer days, guided wildlife walks. Presentations to schools and community groups had also been held.

Mr Les Starling, as a member of North Wales Wildlife Trust and now Chair of the Alun and Chwiler Living Landscape Project, declared an interest in the project, and said that the original idea for the project had come from AONB Team. Since the Project Officer has been appointed (18 months ago) the project had gone from strength to strength

The Chair thanked the Project Officer for a most interesting and informative presentation.

## 5. Partnership Working Groups

The AONB Officer gave a brief update on the progress of the Working Groups explaining that, two of the Working Groups had already held meetings, and the Heritage, Culture and Communities Working Group had a meeting convened for June 10th, and the Recreation, Tourism and Business Engagement Working Group would meet June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The AONB Officer explained that each Working Group would appoint their own Chair, and the individual Chairs would report back to the Partnership Meetings.

### Report from Chairpersons of the Working Groups

#### 5.1 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Working Group

Mr Michael Skuse reported that the SDF Working Group administered the AONB's SDF Fund which was made available every year to AONB's in Wales by the Welsh Government. The year ran from April to March every year, and the amount varied each year. Last year it was £60,000 and this year £54,000 was available to be awarded to deserving causes during this financial year.

In addition to the basic sum, in some years further funding had become available during the year, last year this amounted to £6,000. SDF funding only provided some of the monies sought by the applicant, and would be supplemented from other sources e.g. Charitable Trusts, Government Agencies and importantly, from local people, who were often active volunteers within the project.

Up to March this year twenty six applications had been approved including assistance towards: Prestatyn Walking Festival, Actif Alyn Woods, Alyn and Chwiler Living Landscape Project. A full report on last year's activities would be

made to the SDF Working Group at their next meeting due to be held on May 27<sup>th</sup>, and the report would also be made available to Partnership Members. This year to date there had been thirty expressions of interest.

Mr Skuse emphasised the importance of the SDF Working Group to the Partnership, and said that he felt privileged to Chair it. He also thanked the Sustainable Development Officer, Ceri Lloyd and Senior AONB and Countryside Officer David Shiel for their diligent commitment to SDF.

## 5.2 Landscape and Built Environment of the AONB Working Group

Councillor Martyn Holland reported that the group had met twice to date, initially to define the role of the group. The group had since been consulted on planning applications. He reiterated that the Joint Committee made the final decisions on responses and the Working Group provided expert advice only. Presentations to the group had been completed by Flintshire County Council's and Wrexham County Borough Council's Planning Departments on their imminent Local Development Plans (LDP). Further consultations would be taking place.

The group had commented on two large scale developments in Wrexham County Borough. An Action Plan for the Group had been completed. A lively discussion had been held on 'innovative design of buildings within the AONB'. Dark Sky Status had also been discussed, and it had been recognised that there were a lot of visitors who wanted to go to an area which had Dark Sky Status. Snowdonia National Park now had Dark Sky Status.

Listed Buildings at Risk within the AONB had also been discussed, and the Group would also liaise closely with the Heritage, Culture and Communities Working Group.

The Chair of the Joint Committee, Councillor Hugh Jones, thanked the Chairs of the Working Groups and said that their reports demonstrated how vital the role of the Working Groups was to the Partnership.

The AONB Officer also thanked the Chairs of the Working Groups and said it was important that the members reported back to the Partnership.

The AONB Officer confirmed that rather than formal minutes, just brief notes of the Working Group meetings with action points would be completed, with the Chairs reporting back to the Partnership Meetings.

### RESOLVED

All Working Group notes to be brought to the AONB Communication Officer's attention for circulation to the Partnership Members.

## 6. AONB Annual Forum Review of Last Year's Forum

### The Historical Environment of the AONB

The AONB Officer provided a brief overview of last year's Forum which was held on November 20<sup>th</sup> 2015 and hosted by Flintshire County Council at County Hall, Mold. The theme for the Forum was 'The Historic Environment of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB' and key note presentations were given by:

Fiona Gale - County Archaeologist, Ian Grant - Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

Richard Hankinson - Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, and Dr Rachel Pope - University of Liverpool. Over 40 people had attended the forum. The AONB

Officer said that the format for the Forum had been a success and this would be the template for future events.

6.1 Proposals for this year's Forum

The AONB Officer asked members to consider a theme for this autumn's Forum.

Proposals:

The Landscape and Art of the AONB	- as part of 'Our Picturesque Landscape Project'
Tourism within the AONB	- Year of Adventure/next Year of Adventure
Alun & Chilwer Landscape Project	- Biodiversity
Sustainable Management	- Grazing Project
Black Grouse	- Recovery Project

Discussion ensued and It was suggested that two events could be held, one in the autumn (to feature 'Our Picturesque Landscape Project'), and one in the summer (to feature Tourism in the AONB).

RESOLVED

That the Recreation, Tourism and Business Engagement Working Group Meeting be asked to formalise arrangements at its next meeting.

7. AONB Management Plan

The Assistant AONB Officer, David Shiel provided an update on the AONB Management Plan, and explained that the Plan had been adopted by the Joint Committee following consultation last summer. The Plan was currently being translated. Chair of the Joint Committee, Councillor Hugh Jones thanked Mr David Shiel for all their hard work in completing what was a superb document.

8. Review of AONB Familiarisation Days & Future Dates

The AONB Officer thanked members who had attended the Familiarisation Days that had recently been held. He said that there had been a good attendance which had given members an opportunity to network together as well as learning more about key sites in the AONB. The majority of members said that they had enjoyed the informality of familiarisation days and that it had broadened their understanding of the AONB. One member proposed that a short walk/site visit to be convened for members who could not walk very far.

The AONB Officer said that other interested parties could also be informally invited to the site visits and introduced to the group. Members agreed that the site visits had proved to be crucial in building the Partnership, and that they should continue.

Mr Tony King raised concerns that at the recent Aberduna Quarry Site Visit, members did not visit the Engine House, which was a listed building that was at risk as a result of over mature trees originally planted to screen the quarry.

8.1 There were three dates to be noted for further Familiarisation Days:

Prestatyn Hillside - Friday 1st July

- Llangollen Railway - Friday 16th September
- Caer Drewyn Hilfort - Friday 4th November

The AONB Officer asked members to consider venues for further site visits. Discussion ensued. Proposed Site Visits:

- Llanarmon yn Ial - a prominent village within the AONB
- Jubilee Tower - it was noted that one site visit had previously been completed to the Tower
- A Working Farm within AONB - how a farm/farmer functions within the AONB

**Action**

David Shiel, Howard Sutcliffe, Helen Mroweic, Ceri Lloyd, Karen Holthofer

9. Urgent Items

9.1 Parking within the AONB

Mr Michael Skuse raised concerns regarding parking issues within the AONB, and said that on recent visits within the AONB he had not been able to park his car at Moel Famau, Loggerheads, Llangwyfan or Llantysilio car parks. It was apparent that the more successful the AONB was becoming with tourism, the more difficult it was becoming to park. Discussion ensued.

Mr David Shiel said, that Moel Famau Car Park had been extended three times and Loggerheads car park was due to be extended. Parking was an increasing issue for the AONB. Parking had been included in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy. The AONB Officer said that the possibility of Park & Ride systems should be considered. The AONB had run a mini bus service to reduce the cars in and out of Llangollen two years ago, and it had been successful.

9.2 Future Landscapes Wales Working Group - Appendix 1

The Review of Protected Landscapes in Wales

The AONB Officer reported that he had a seat on the Future Landscapes Wales Working Group, and circulated a copy of a letter that had recently been sent to the Minister for Natural Resources in Welsh Government (Carl Sergeant AM) which summarised the current position.

9.3 Frequency of AONB Meetings

The Chair asked members to consider whether two meetings per year of the AONB Partnership was enough. Discussion ensued. It was proposed that a third meeting be held which should focus on a particular theme e.g. recreation, biodiversity.

**RESOLVED**

The AONB Team to arrange a date for a third full AONB Partnership Meeting

10. **Future Meeting Date & Venue**  
Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2016  
At 10:00 am

DRAFT



## APPENDIX 1

Minister for Natural Resources  
Welsh Government  
Ty Hywel  
Pierhead Street  
Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA

3 May 2016

Dear Minister

When I accepted the role as Chair of the Future Landscapes Wales working group I agreed to provide you with an interim update prior to the elections to the National Assembly. This note performs that function. It does not pre-judge the conclusions of the Working Group and Project Group activity; they will follow in due course. Instead it illustrates the scope of discussions we have had since January and provides a sense of the broad direction of travel across the whole Future Landscapes Wales programme.

The Marsden report has triggered a significant debate within the Future Landscapes Wales groups about the principles and functions for designated landscapes in a Wales which has a clear focus on the well-being of future generations. Over a relatively short space of time the Future Landscapes Wales programme has taken the Marsden Report, isolated its key themes and recommendations and considered them within the new legislative framework; a context much better understood now than twelve to eighteen months ago. Our deliberations have been driven by an ambitious and collaborative spirit from all participants.

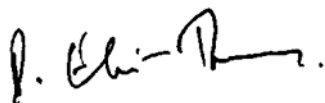
The relationship between people and place has emerged as an important element of well-being; the landscapes of Wales reflect this relationship. Our discussions are considering how designated landscapes both in their present form and any future approaches can be managed to enhance their distinctive qualities using the principles of sustainable management of natural resources as defined in the Environment (Wales) Act in ways which maximise the contribution to the well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

It is clear that new ways of working will need to be adopted. An approach that is underpinned by principles which respect and strengthen the relationship between people and place may lead to better shared outcomes. Such principles are also applicable in areas outside the current designated landscapes.

Flexibility in structures and governance has also been discussed. This approach may better respect the distinctive qualities of landscapes and the balance between national and local interests than the more centrally determined and uniform structures currently available in statute. Possible approaches include, adopting basic standards for governance for any entity associated with an existing area or proposed for a new area. This would then allow for the needs and opportunities of the specific area to determine the precise approach, helping to unlock genuinely participatory approaches to landscape management. We have also considered enabling existing statutory authorities or lead bodies to request changes to their structure or status where they can demonstrate that doing so will enhance delivery.

The special qualities of the existing designated landscapes extend beyond a visual amenity interpretation of natural beauty and incorporate the potential for soil, carbon, and water management, and the potential sustainable management of other valuable natural resources. The working group wants a national conversation about Wales' landscapes and their value to the nation. The public should play a part in determining a contemporary interpretation of the special qualities of designated landscapes. The existing designated landscapes should then be able to state clearly the respective special qualities to be enhanced.

The Marsden report drew our attention to the untapped potential for developing new approaches to economic development within these areas. Done effectively such approaches could be replicated across rural Wales. I am pleased to report that these issues are being explored and considered in detail. Our work is moving in the direction of a flexible, place based, approach which is locally determined within agreed national principles and values. Harnessing the distinctive qualities of landscapes through the sustainable management of natural resources well-being will be maximised. I anticipate us identifying short term actions that can be taken by Government; existing authorities, and partners to improve administration and outcomes, as well as setting a clear direction for the medium to long term. Wales' landscapes are hugely important and valuable, culturally, socially, environmentally and economically. Our designated landscapes, the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks, contribute to this rich diversity. I am confident that approaches will emerge from the Future Landscapes Wales programme of work to provide a lasting, forward-looking settlement that is grounded in contemporary Welsh legislation.



Yours sincerely,  
Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas

DRAFT