



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

Minutes of the Meeting held on
Friday 10th March 2017
At
Conference Room 2
Llangollen Pavilion
at 10:00 am

AONB Partnership Members

Representing Land Management
Sandy Archdale

Representing Access and Recreation
Andrew Worthington OBE (Chair)

Individual Interest
John I Roberts
Helen Walker
David Davies

Representing Rural Interest
Christine Evans
Roger Cragg

Representing Business Interest
Dewi Davies

Urban Interest
(Dee Valley and World Heritage Site)
Del Roberts-Jones

Representing Landscape Interest
Michael Skuse

Representing Historical Interest
Tony King

Representing the Built Environment
Philip Durrell

Representing the Natural Environment
Les Starling

Representing Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

Councillor Martyn Holland
Councillor Huw L Jones
Councillor Hugh Jones (Chair of the Joint Committee)
Councillor RJ Dutton OBE
Councillor Lloyd Kenyon
Councillor Paul Cunningham (Vice Chair)
Councillor Colin Legg
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
Anna Irwin (Senior Conservation and Environment Officer)

Representing Denbighshire County Council
Huw Rees (Head of Countryside & Heritage Services)
Fiona Gale (County Archaeologist)

Representing Flintshire County Council
Tom Woodall (Head of FCC Countryside Service & ROW)

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Observer
Paul Mitchell

Apologies for absence were submitted from: -
Councillor Merfyn Parry, Councillor Stuart Davies, Christine Evans,
Gareth Wyn Jones, Martin Howarth, Helen Mrowiec, Ian Papworth,
Sharron Jones

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Un o'r
Teulu AHNE

{ CLWYDIAN RANGE
AND DEE VALLEY
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Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the spring meeting of the AONB Partnership.

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on October 21st 2016

Matters arising

Philip Durrell, Les Starling to be added to attendees

Sandy Archdale to be added to Landscape Management

2.3 National Grid Visual Improvement Initiative (VIP) including the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)

The AONB had submitted an Expression of Interest for projects associated with the Morwynion Valley and Tremeirchion (National Grid) overhead lines.

The LEI project was being developed locally and led by the Land Management and Natural Environment Working Group. This item was ongoing.

2.4 Scottish Power Overhead Line Undergrounding Programme

This initiative was for low voltage schemes. The sites proposed for undergrounding were: Moel y Parc, Horseshoe Pass (up to the Ponderosa), Ty Mawr Country Park, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, Horseshoe Falls and the Toll booth Café area on the A5.

Moel y Parc application

This existing scheme was scheduled for completion this year. Signage would be erected to inform visitors that the work had been carried out at the instigation of the AONB.

The County Archaeologist added that she was also in negotiation with Scottish Power regarding a potential scheme at Moel Hiraddug to remove redundant poles and lines.

2.5 Sewage Works near Poncysyllte Aqueduct

The AONB Officer updated members on various actions that were being taken to press for removal or remediation of this eyesore within the World Heritage Site.

An officer from NRW (Tom Lewis) had been identified to assist the AONB with the issue.

Welsh Water had recently held a Public Consultation and the AONB Officer had raised the issue of the sewage works.

Roger Cragg said that relocating the plant or pumping the sewage to another treatment works would not be easily achieved and would be an expensive option. He suggested that consideration be given to a more modern installation, using a Rotating Biological Contactor (RCB). This method would include covered tanks and offer some concealment of the sewage works. An example RBC was situated at Llydiart Anne, Llantysilio.

The Landscape Character and Built Environment Working Group were leading on this item.

5. AONB Annual Forum

This year's Forum had been held on the evening of November 30th at

Twm o'r Nant Theatre, Denbigh, with the theme of

'The Natural Environment of the AONB'. The Speakers for the evening were:

Amy Green

(North Wales Wildlife Trust)

- Amy provided a presentation on the Alyn & Chwiler Living Landscape Project

Martin Clift

(RSPB)

- Martin provided a presentation on the North Wales Moors Project & Black Grouse Recovery Project

Sarah Bird

(Chester Zoo)

- Sarah provided a presentation on the Juniper Plant Project at Prestatyn Hillside

The AONB had an active role in all three projects. The Forum had been a very successful evening with over fifty people attending.

5.1 **Local Members & Community Councils within the AONB - Annual Forum**

The AONB Officer explained that an evening or afternoon was offered annually to the Local Members & Community Councils within the AONB, providing an opportunity to meet with the AONB Team. The Forum was to update those attending on the work that the AONB had accomplished within the last year.

This year's Forum was held on the afternoon and evening of February 2nd at Froncysyllte Community Centre and although attendance at the Forum had been disappointing, links with the Councils of Chirk, Cefn Mawr and Llangwyfan and Llanbedr had been created, and the AONB Officer had since been out to meet with other Local Members.

It was suggested that the venue of Forum should be rotated around the AONB and it was proposed that the next Forum to be held in the north. It was also proposed that there should be a 'champion' for the AONB on each of the Town and Community Councils in order to raise awareness of any AONB related matters. However, it was recognised that this could not be completed until after the May elections. John Roberts added that the Friends of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB were inviting Community Councils to consider becoming a Community Partner in order to champion the AONB.

A presentation to Wrexham Town and Community Forum was also proposed, and members agreed that this would be a worthwhile initiative

Action

1. The Forum to be rotated around different venues within the AONB, and the next Forum being held in the north
2. A proposal for an AONB Champion to be proposed to each of the Town and Community Councils (via letter)
3. The AONB Team to approach Wrexham Town and Community Forum to inquire if the AONB could complete a presentation to its members

8. **AONB Award for 2016**

The AONB Officer explained that this year's awards were presented to the Community of Llandegla and to Mike Worsley and James Yale (Volunteer Award) on January 20th by the Chair of the Joint Committee at Llandegla Community Shop. It was a very worthwhile day, and it was recognised as good practice for the AONB Team/Partnership to go to the community of Llandegla to present the awards, and to reflect on the work of volunteers within the AONB.

Councillor Martyn Holland said that the Community of Llandegla had been delighted to have received the award.

The Chair of the Joint Committee said that it was important to recognise the volunteering spirit and community commitment that were within the AONB.

Mike Worsley and James Yale were also delighted to receive the AONB Volunteer Award.

The AONB Officer asked meeting members to be actively seeking, and proposing businesses or individual nominations in preparation for next year's awards.

The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting

2. **Update from the AONB Officer**

Working Groups

The AONB Officer said that most of the groups now benefited from external members who were not members of the Partnership. These members helped to raise the profile of the Partnership, and he praised the Working Groups for the work that they were doing on behalf of the Partnership and the AONB.

AONB Joint Committee

The next meeting of the Joint Committee would be held on Friday June 23rd at 10:00 am in Conference Room 2 County Hall Ruthin.

National Association of AONB's (NAAONB)

The Chair of the Joint Committee and the AONB Officer had recently attended the NAAONB's Annual Meeting. The potential effects of Brexit were discussed, along with a presentation on National Capital.

Hedge Laying Competition

The AONB Officer said that this was the third year that the competition had been held. He explained that the volunteers had put a lot of effort into laying hedges throughout the county. Hedge laying was a traditional craft that allowed a hedge to be partially cut and laid down at an angle, which resulted in regrowth of the hedge coming from the bottom. This skill was an old technique that was essential for the much needed regeneration of hedgerows. Hedgerows were also essential habitats for wildlife. This year's competition had been held on private land near Bodfari and in total 77 metres of hedge had been laid by 26 competitors. Discussion ensued and members agreed that if the Natural Environment was to be properly protected, younger generations would need to be educated in these traditional skills. All agreed that it was an excellent event.

East Cheshire & West Cheshire Countryside Services

The AONB Officer explained that he along with other members of the AONB Team had recently visited East Cheshire and West Cheshire Countryside Services.

East Cheshire Countryside Service was continuing to operate efficiently. However, West Cheshire was to lose its Countryside Management Service.

By comparison, Welsh Countryside Services had been treated more favourably by its Local Authorities.

North East Wales Grazing Scheme (NEWGS)

The AONB Officer said that NEWGS was a Sustainable Management Scheme, and an Expression of Interest (EOI) had been submitted. The first EOI bid had been unsuccessful. However, the second application had been approved. The project would be for held for over three years to develop grazing for cattle, ponies and sheep. The project would focus on landscapes that were not currently being grazed and would include Prestatyn Hillside and Coed Moel Famau as well as sites within the Dee Valley. The scheme was a Welsh Government Funding initiative that would work in partnership with landowners and conservation officers. Shepherding would also be re-introduced as part of the project. The Chair thanked both Rachel Jones and David Shiel for all their hard work on the application.

3. **Presentation: 'Sustainable Development Fund'**

Sustainable Development Officer, Ceri Lloyd provided a clear and concise power point presentation explaining that 18 projects and 3 grants schemes had been completed this year, with £55,000 being claimed from Welsh Government. SDF Funding had also contributed to the creation of five jobs.

Countryside Grant Scheme

- The Countryside Grant Scheme was in partnership with FWAG, with up to 50% of the total cost of a project funded.

Telephone Kiosks

- This project was in partnership with Cadwyn Clwyd, with the potential for redundant red telephone kiosks to be transformed into Information Points or Defibrillator points.

Actif Woods

- This project was located in both Flintshire and Wrexham
Flintshire - Twelve adults with mental health difficulties attended Actif woods to complete Woodland Management activities including charcoal making. The project was held for twelve weeks.
Wrexham - Woodland Gym - woodland walk events

were held.

Woodland Skills Centre

- Volunteers had assisted with the erection of a new building that would be completed on 22nd March. An invitation would be circulated to the Partnership to attend the opening of the building.

Nature Spy

- Partnership member Helen Walker had been supporting Nature Spy. Volunteers had been recruited to examine the species within the AONB. Nature Spy had been visiting schools within the AONB in order to introduce children to the project and the AONB. A camera was hidden within the school grounds. All recordings were on the 'Cofnod' site.

Nature Spy

Some members raised concerns regarding the safety of the camera equipment, the Sustainable Development Officer responded that equipment was quite secure. One camera had been vandalised at a school but fortunately the school was insured for the damage to the equipment.

4. Partnership Working Groups

The Chairs of the Working Groups provided a brief verbal update on the progress of their groups.

4.1 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Working Group

Chair of the SDF Working Group, Mike Skuse, reported that subject to Welsh Government confirmation there would be £55,000 available for SDF funding for the forthcoming year. £5,000 would be deducted for administration costs and £5,000 for the Countryside Grant Scheme. The following allocations had been made:

- £10,000 to encourage disadvantaged people to visit the AONB.
- £5,000 to assist in the training of traditional skills to young people
- £3,000 for the Good Grub Club, to assist with the Dee Valley Farmers to work with local butchers

There had been an underspend of £40,000 from the Welsh Protected Landscapes budget from which the AONB had bid for £20,000 to assist in further funding four projects that had already received an SDF grant. Mike went on to explain that the emphasis from Welsh Government appeared to focus on funding larger scale projects that would include an economic or health benefit. This appeared to be associated with the Environment Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, both of which implied that protected rural areas, including National Parks and AONBs, must include economic benefit and health benefits within their proposals. Two more ideas for possible funding had recently been discussed. One was for part funding the Ordnance Survey to produce a 1/25000 map for the AONB. The other was to fund the planting of trees to compensate for loss through Ash Die back (in hedgerows and in unused or infertile pockets of land on farms).

With regard to the Good Grub Club the Assistant AONB Officer said that there was still outstanding work required on promoting local produce into suitable outlets, and expanding opportunity.

It was also proposed that the Local Access Forums in Flintshire and Wrexham be approached regarding the possibility of access being enhanced for disabled people to visit the AONB through a joint project.

The Chair thanked Mike Skuse and the group for all the work that had been completed.

Action

Local Access Forums in FCC and WCBC to be approached regarding enhanced disabled access – possible joint project

4.2 Landscape Character and Built Environment Working Group

Chair of the Working Group, Councillor Martyn Holland, reported that the group had met on the 20th January. Matters discussed included:

Poncysyllte Sewage Treatment Works

The issue was constantly being raised, the sewage works required improvement or relocation as previously discussed

Undergrounding of powerlines at Moel y Parc

The Moel y Parc Project would go ahead but no start details had been announced.

Ash Die Back

Sam Milner and Richard Sumner (both of NRW) had given a presentation on Ash Die Back. A Management Plan was discussed to assist with managing the disease and the decline of trees.

Dark Skies Status

The AONB's application for Dark Skies Status Funding had been granted.

Denbighshire Draft SPG Consultation: Recreational Public Open Space

Recreational Public Open Space Consultation had also been considered by the group.

Summary of Planning Consultations:

It was noted that of the three Local Planning Authorities the largest number of AONB comments that had not been accepted related to Denbighshire. Members had raised concerns and the issue was being monitored long term. It was suggested that some members of DCC planning Authority be invited to a working group meeting to discuss further.

Loggerheads Additional Car Park

The car park was now open and was being significantly used.

The AONB Officer thanked Councillor Holland for his support regarding the car park.

Moel Famau Visitor Pressure

The volume of visitors to Moel Famau was discussed together with the impact upon the local residents who lived close to the access roads to the area. Dog fouling issues at Moel Famau Country Park had continued to be a concern.

Discussion ensued. The Assistant AONB Officer explained that as part of its Tourism Growth Plan, the AONB Team were working closely with DCC Economic Development Department to consider options on how to move an initiative forward to encourage visitors to disperse to other parts of the AONB and towns like Ruthin and Mold. They were also considering the multi-use of car park tickets that could offer the visitor free parking in for example Ruthin or 20% percent off the admission fee at Ruthin Gaol etc.

In summing up the Chair of the Joint Committee said that alternative sustainable transport should be considered and a strategic plan would be required to address access to the AONB and the impact of visitor pressure on the area.

Action

Officers from the AONB and DCC Planning Authority to be invited to attend a Future Working Group Meeting.

4.3

Heritage, Culture and Communities

The Chair of the Working Group, Christine Evans was unable to attend the meeting and the lead officer for the group, County Archaeologist, Fiona Gale reported on behalf of the group.

Historic Environment Act 2016:

The new Act was outlined and it was explained that new guidance would soon be available which would link into the Act.

Project Work

The Group was considering various sites including Minera Quarry.

The County Archaeologist would explore funding opportunities from Cadw, Cadwyn, and SDF.

Welsh Government Access Project:

This was a Welsh Government Access project at Gop Cairn, Trelawnyd, which would enhance access and interpretation at the site. A leaflet would also be produced.

Clwyd Trust Limestone Caves Project:

The County Archaeologist explained that the aim of the project was to try to assess which caves could have had human occupation. 'Our Picturesque Landscape Project' had also been discussed and the group was now working towards its Forward Work Programme

4.4 **Land Management and the Natural Environment**

Chair of the Working Group, Gareth Wyn Jones, was unable to attend the meeting. However he had provided a brief which Les Starling presented to meeting.

National Grid Landscape Enhancement Scheme in the Tremeirchion & Morwynion

The AONB had been invited to submit a full application for the project. The proposal was a 4 year scheme with 15 landowners already engaged to participate in the Morwynion Valley on projects such as hedge maintenance, heathland and roadside nature reserves. However, there were frustrations regarding the application process being too complicated, with a lack of understanding on aspects of the project amongst the National Grid and regulator, who ultimately approved the application. Officers were working hard to overcome this situation, given that the project was an excellent opportunity for the AONB.

North East Wales Grazing Scheme

The Group was looking forward to seeing the project develop. There were 35 proposed sites all with a conservation interest that would benefit from the grazing project. Scrub removal and boundary maintenance such as fencing and hedging formed an important part of the proposals.

Llantysilio Mountain

Proposed works demonstrating the increasing biodiversity value of the site were in progress. The RSPB were currently involved in various initiatives on the mountain.

Sheep Worrying

This was an increasing problem and the Group supported the AONB's work in partnership with North Wales Police to launch an awareness campaign for dog owners called 'Operation Flock'. This campaign along with the AONB's support would be welcomed by farmers and landowners alike. The lack of awareness and promoting of the Countryside Code was highlighted at the meeting.

4.5 **Recreation, Tourism and Business Engagement**

The Chair of the Working Group Dewi Davies, was not able to attend the meeting. The Senior Recreation Officer provided a brief written update on the Group's work. Unfortunately due to staff capacity a meeting had not been held since the last Partnership meeting. However, a date for a meeting has now been set and Jim Jones from North Wales Tourism would be attending.

Limestone Legacy Project

A draft leaflet had now been produced and had been circulated to the group for comments.

Visitor Access Data

The data has been circulated to the group.

The Chair of the Partnership thanked all of the Chairs of the Working Groups for their reports and said that it was evident that the Working Groups were now fully operational and providing a significant contribution.

The Chair of the Joint Committee added that the reports from the Working Group Chairs demonstrated the huge amount of work that was taking place and the wide range of projects that were being completed. This exhibited just how active the AONB was. This was all the more admirable because all of the Partnership members gave their time voluntarily and that this was very much appreciated by the AONB.

5. **AONB Partnership – Summer Meeting & Field Trip**

The next Partnership Meeting will be held on Friday June 16th.

It was agreed at the last Partnership meeting that the Summer Partnership meeting would include a field trip (following the Partnership Meeting).

Members considered various sites within the AONB for the field trip to be held, and it was decided that the Partnership would make a site visit to Tomen y Rhodwydd

Action

The next Partnership Meeting would be held on Friday 16th June at the Old School House, LLanarmon yn Ial followed by a site visit to the Motte and Bailey castle – Tomen y Rhodwydd

6. **AONB Dark Skies Initiative**

The Assistant AONB Officer explained that the application to Cadwyn Clwyd and the SDF Fund had both been successful. Dark Sky Wales and Bro had been appointed to assess the quality of the skies of the AONB and to advise on how the application should be taken forward. He went on to explain that AONB was probably not large enough to apply for a Dark Sky Reserve status. However, a Dark Sky Park designation could be an achievable objective.

A Stakeholder event would be held on 20th March, along with six public events throughout the year. A mobile planetarium would be used at all the events. Mapping would be completed to gather dark sky readings at 40 venues within the AONB, with volunteers being trained on how to monitor the skies.

The Chair of the Joint Committee and the Chair of the Partnership along with the Chairs of the Working Groups had been invited to the Stakeholder Event.

7. **Natural Resources Policy Consultation**

The AONB Officer briefly explained the purpose of the Welsh Government Consultation:

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 required Welsh Ministers to prepare, publish and implement a national Natural Resources Policy – a document setting out their general and specific policies for contributing to achieving sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) in relation to Wales, including what they consider should be done in relation to climate change and biodiversity.

The AONB Officer explained that the AONB had been working closely with the Welsh National Parks and AONB's and a collective response had been submitted on behalf of all the protected landscapes in Wales (previously circulated).

Discussion ensued. The Chair of the Joint Committee said that some elements of the response could link to the aims of the Health and Wellbeing Future Generations Act and suggested that maybe this was something a Working Group could consider and how it related to the work of the AONB. This might also assist with project funding applications.

8. **Any Other Business**

Radio 4 Ramblings Programme

The County Archaeologist reported that broadcaster, journalist and author, Clare Balding had recently visited the AONB to explore two of the hillforts as part of the Radio 4 series, 'Ramblings'. The programme was available as a podcast or could be accessed through the Ramblings programme page on the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006xrr2>

Our Picturesque Landscape Project

The Assistant AONB Officer explained that the second stage of the application would be submitted by August, and provided a brief update of the project:

Historic Sites

- Consultants were examining the historic sites within the World Heritage Site

Connectivity with Species

- Connectivity with species was currently being

monitored, and mapping had been completed to take the project forward

Community Consultations

- Community Consultations were now complete and some projects had come forward

Wernffrwd, Llangollen

- Detailed plans had been drafted for new access on to the WHS

The Dell, Plas Newydd

- New views would be opened up

Key Views

- Six key views of the WHS had been considered. Positive Woodland Management was now being examined in order to open up the views

Interpretation Plan

- The Plan was currently being developed

Friends of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

The AONB Officer congratulated the Friends on reaching 180 members, and added that the group was going from strength to strength and thanked the Senior Recreation Officer and all involved for their hard work.

Dementia Friendly Gardens

Councillor Paul Cunningham asked if the AONB could consider more areas/gardens for dementia suffering patients. The AONB Officer said that there was a garden in Corwen that was being developed with dementia sufferers however, this was something that the AONB could look to develop further.

9. Future Meeting Dates:

AONB Partnership Meetings:

Friday	16 th	June	2017
Friday	6 th	October	2017