



The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Partnership
Minutes of the Meeting held on
Friday 6th October 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

Representing Urban Interest

Del- Roberts Jones

Representing Rural Interest

Roger Cragg
Christine Evans

Representing Business Interest

Dewi Davies

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 Hugh Jones (Chair of the Joint Committee)

Councillor Paul Cunningham (Vice Chair)

Councillor Tony Thomas (AONB Joint Committee)

Councillor Huw L Jones (DCC)

Councillor Christine Marston (DCC)

Councillor Colin Legg (FCC)

Councillor Paul D Jones (WCBC)

Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones (WCBC)

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 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)

Apologies for absence were submitted from: -

Anna Irwin, Councillor Carolyn Thomas, David Davies, Gareth Wyn Jones,
Helen Mrowiec, Helen Walker, Paul Mitchell, Sharron Jones, Ian Papworth

Welcome

Tirweddau
i fyw
.org.uk

BRYNIAU CLWYD A
DYFFRYN DYFRDWY
Un o'r
Teulu AHNE

CLWYDIAN RANGE
AND DEE VALLEY
One of the
AONB Family

Landscapes
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The Chair
welcomed
members
to the
autumn

meeting of the AONB Partnership, and particularly the newly elected members:
Councillor Christine Marston, Councillor Paul D Jones,
Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones.

He explained that the Local Authority Members who would sit on the Partnership had been confirmed as:

Representing Denbighshire County Council:	Representing Wrexham County Borough Council:	Representing Flintshire County Council
Councillor Christine Marston	Councillor Hugh Jones	Councillor Paul Cunningham (Vice Chair)
Councillor Huw L Jones	Councillor Paul D Jones	Councillor Colin Legg
Councillor Martyn Holland	Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones	Councillor Owen Thomas

Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on June 16th 2017

Matters Arising

3. AONB Dark Skies Initiative

Street Lighting and Crime

Ian Papworth had circulated two articles that confirming that research indicated that dark sky initiatives did not increase the crime rate.

Action

The Communications Officer to circulate the articles to the Partnership.

Dark Sky Event at Gop Cairn, Trelawnyd

This was an open event. David Llewellyn from Dark Sky Wales conducted educational astronomy sessions in the planetarium dome, which had been assembled in the Memorial Hall. A walk to Gop Cairn followed where a telescope had been placed for stargazing. The evening was very successful with around 100 people attending.

The next event would be held during the school half term week at Ty Mawr Country Park.

Action

Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones said that she would advertise the Dark Skies events in a local publication that she contributed to.

5. AONB Annual Forum

The next Forum would be held on:

Thursday 23rd November, Llangollen Pavilion at 6 pm

The Keynote speakers would be Robert Dingle (The Offa's Dyke National Trail Officer) and Hannah Arndt (Access Officer/Ride North Wales).

5.1 Champions for the AONB from Town & Community Councils within the AONB

An AONB Champion to be proposed to each Town & Community Council in order to raise awareness of any AONB related matters.

The Communications Officer had contacted all the Town and Community Councils within the AONB and ten members had volunteered to be Champions for the AONB. A very positive meeting had been held at Plas Newydd, Llangollen, with eight of the Champions attending. A further meeting would shortly be held at Loggerheads.

Action

- AONB Champions to be invited to AONB Events
- Town & Community Councils that had not responded to be re-contacted.

Wrexham Town & Community Forum

The AONB Team would contact Wrexham Town & Community Forum when all the Local Members had been appointed to the Partnership

Wrexham Town & Community Forum had been contacted and members of the AONB Team would complete a presentation to its members at their meeting due to be held on 22nd March 2018.

6. A Learning Journey – Grant Availability

Cadwyn Clwyd are currently offering a Learning Journey Project 70% funding for £1,000 project.

The Assistant AONB Officer said that some opportunities had been discussed. The Landscape Character and Built Environment Working Group were considering a possible site visit to Moffat, Scotland – Moffat had gained ‘Dark Sky Community Status’. The Natural Environment and Land Management Working Group were considering a site visit to Kent Downs AONB to observe how they were managing Ash Die Back.

Action

Learning Journey Grant to be considered further by all Working Groups.

1. **Update from the AONB Officer**

Ministerial visit

The AONB Officer explained that Lesley Griffiths AM had recently visited Plas Newydd. The visit had given the AONB the opportunity to impress on the Minister its forward looking, and best producing approach of all AONB’s in Wales. The meeting had been very positive.

Public Service Boards (DCC, WCBC, FCC)

Members of the Team had attended the Denbighshire and Conwy Public Service Board Meetings. A meeting with Flintshire would follow.

Joint Committee

Joint Committee Members had been confirmed as follows:

Denbighshire County Council	Flintshire County Council	Wrexham County Borough Council
Councillor Tony Thomas	Councillor Derek Butler	Councillor Hugh Jones
Councillor Julian Thomas-Hill	Councillor Carolyn Thomas	Councillor David Kelly

The next meeting would be held on November 17th at 10:00am in The Guild Hall, Wrexham.

1.1 **World Heritage Site Board**

The Chair of the Joint Committee said that some of the key issues that were currently being considered included the World Heritage Site’s contribution to the local community and parking problems. The Local Authorities were now working collaboratively and progress was being made. It was emphasised that the World Heritage Site was part of the AONB and the AONB should be included in all aspects of work as a partner.

Councillor Huw L Jones raised concerns regarding the Canal and River Trust holding some of their meetings in Cardiff which Board members could not attend. However, it was recognised that the Canal and River Trust had a wide ownership.

Allotments

The management for all the allotments in Denbighshire had now been transferred to the Countryside Service.

The National Eisteddfod

The AONB had a presence at the National Eisteddfod this year. It remained an excellent event for Llangollen and the AONB would like to continue to support the Eisteddfod in the future. The AONB Team had also attended the Denbigh & Flint Show.

Visit Wales’ year of myths and legends - Corwen- New Film Show

With 2017 being Visit Wales’ year of myths and legends the school children of Caer Drewyn School, Corwen had created a short film that celebrated their landscape and local legends. The project was put together by Denbighshire Arts, Countryside and Heritage Services and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB who had employed artist Rob Spaul to work with the children. The film featured

the area's Celtic connections and both the spectacular Iron Age Hillfort of Caer Drewyn and Pen y Pigyn woodland with its association to Owain Glyndwr. The film was shown at the end of the meeting.

1.2 **Working Group Membership**

The AONB Officer explained that, because of change of Partnership Membership, there were now some gaps appearing within the groups. He requested that members reviewed their working group membership to ensure that this properly reflected their interests and experience. Members could change membership if necessary. He also enquired if the Local Authority members who attended the working group meetings had taken any issues raised at the meetings back to their Local Authority for further consideration.

Action

- All members to reconsider the working group they attend
- New Local Authority Members to consider attending one of the groups
- AONB Officer to meet with all members

1.3 **Sandstone Ridge Trust**

The Sandstone Ridge covers 230 sq kms of rolling hills and escarpments between Frodsham and Helsby in the north, through Delamere, Cuddington and Beeston, to Whitchurch in the south. It was home for 36,000 people, the location for about a thousand businesses, and was visited by more than a million people each year. It provided food, water, timber and minerals, and for many was an important place to exercise, relax, and enjoy its views, landscape, wildlife and heritage.

The AONB Officer explained that he and his team had been approached to assist in a Pathfinder Project for the Trust, as part of a two year Heritage Lottery funded project that had been awarded to the Trust to explore how best to look after the Sandstone Ridge for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The AONB would be Consultees for the Sandstone Ridge Trust. The Trust would make a financial contribution to the AONB for four seminars to be held to progress the matter.

Welsh National Parks Conference

All of the Lead Officers from the AONB's in Wales had been invited to the two day conference which was held in Brecon. The Conference was addressed by the Lead Civil Servant for the Environment, Andrew Slade.

2. **Consultation Draft AONB Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)**

The AONB Planning Officer explained that the draft SPG (previously circulated) had been prepared on behalf of the three Local Planning Authorities (Denbighshire, Wrexham, and Flintshire) and the AONB by Iwan Evans Planning. The document introduced the AONB, defined natural beauty, identified the AONB's special qualities as set out in the AONB Management Plan, and defined landscape types and character. Factors influencing landscape change were also highlighted and key design considerations described – scale, siting, design, materials, setting and landscaping.

The next step was for the three local authorities and the AONB to endorse the draft document for consultation purposes. Flintshire County Council had already approved the draft and Denbighshire's Planning Committee would be considering it next week. The consultation would be for eight weeks and all comments would be considered by the local planning authorities and Landscape Character & Built Environment Working Group in due course. Flintshire County Council were leading the consultation, which it was hoped would take place before Christmas. Following the consultations, the finally agreed document would be adopted as formal planning guidance.

Discussion ensued, during which two minor amendments were proposed. These were a recognition of the uncertainty surrounding agri-environment support schemes post-Brexit and clarification of the statement relating to the AONB's special qualities in paragraph 9. A member asked if Permitted Development Rights in the AONB would be affected and the Planning Officer clarified that they would not. Clarification was also sought on whether development control officers had an input into the draft document and the planning officer explained that each planning authority had consulted internally, although Flintshire's Development Control Team had been represented on the SPG officers working group.

Action

The Partnership endorsed the document for approval by the Joint Committee.

3. Update From Working Groups

3.1 Heritage, Culture & Communities

Chair of the Working Group, Christine Evans, gave a brief update on the work of the group.

Scottish Power Overhead Line Undergrounding Programme

Work was being progressed on the Ty Mawr and Horseshoe Falls undergrounding schemes.

Excavations at Moel y Gaer

Archaeologists from Oxford University had been continuing archaeological work at Moel y Gaer, Bodfari, and two artists had been working with the excavation team. The art work has been exhibited in London and next year there would be an exhibition on the Llŷn Peninsula.

Excavations at Penycloddiau

Liverpool University students had been involved in excavations at Penycloddiau. There would be one more season of work here but it would not be run as a student training excavation.

Moel Arthur

Clwydian Range Archaeological Group (CRAG) volunteers had been continuing excavation work on the slopes of Moel Arthur.

Christine raised concerns regarding low attendance at meetings and suggested that members who had not been attending should be contacted.

The AONB Officer suggested that a priority project needed to be developed. It was also suggested that the Chair of the Corwen Archaeological group be invited to join the group.

Action

- Membership to be kept under review

3.2 Land Management & the Natural Environment

Les Starling gave an update on behalf of the Chair of the Group, Gareth Wyn Jones, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Les explained that one meeting has been held since the last Partnership.

National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)

Under this scheme the AONB had convened a project called

'Lost Landscapes' – working in partnership with farmers and landowners within the transmission line corridor in the Bryneglwys and Tremeirchion areas. A number of schemes had been agreed which included boundary restoration, heathland management, meadow creation and small woodland planting. The Project has been accepted by National Grid and was now awaiting final approval from Ofgem. This was expected in October.

North East Wales Grazing Scheme - A Sustainable Management Scheme application to Welsh Government

The AONB was leading on this project which aimed to address one of the fundamental issues affecting many of the key habitats in the AONB which was a lack of grazing. In many places it was left to volunteers or contractors to cut and clear these sites. A more sustainable approach was to work with local farmers to help bring them back into some sort of grazing regime. The project had identified forty sites across North East Wales and was working with ten partners. The project would work on the branding of produce linked to the positive management of these areas and would include training in stock and habitat management.

Whitebeam

The AONB had been working with NRW and Chester Zoo to monitor the Whitebeam population within the Eglwyseg Valley. A 1987 survey recorded 240 plants in the Valley and established that they were a separate species unique to this area. The Eglwyseg Valley therefore had the global population of this species. The project had carried out an initial survey at the end of the summer using drones to survey the cliff face, but with patchy results.

The Alyn and Wheeler Project

The Alyn and Wheeler Project was led by the North Wales Wildlife Trust, and had achieved much good work over the past three years. However it had now come to the end of its funding. Applications to extend the project had unfortunately not been successful, although there was a strong desire by all parties concerned to continue this work at some time in the future if a way forward could be found.

3.3 Landscape Character & Built Environment

Chair of the group, Cllr Martyn Holland, was unable to attend the meeting, so the Planning Officer reported on progress.

The group had last met in July and the next meeting was to take place later this month. Apart from routine work on responding to planning and development consultations, the main focus of the group over recent months has been on delivery of three key AONB Management Plan actions – pursuing Dark Skies recognition, AONB Supplementary Planning Guidance and the Scottish Power overhead line undergrounding programme 'Improving the View'. In relation to 'Improving the View', it was pleasing to report that work had started on undergrounding overhead lines at Moel y Parc.

The last meeting had also considered the AONB's response to two Welsh Government Consultations – the *Draft Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for the National Development Framework* and *Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*. Both consultations had raised significant issues, notably in relation to giving greater emphasis to the 'Sandford Principle' (giving greater weight to conservation where there is irreconcilable conflict with other purposes), and the need to highlight that the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB is an exemplar of integrated working.

The group had also raised the matter of developing the AONB's relationship with the local planning authorities, which would be given further consideration.

The main topic for discussion at the next meeting would be the draft Dark Skies Action Plan.

3.4 Recreation, Tourism & Business Engagement

Chair of the group, Dewi Davies, explained that the Terms of Reference for the group had now been completed.

Denbighshire and Wrexham Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultations had been considered.

AONB Annual Forum Thursday 23rd November

The Keynote speakers for the Forum, as previously stated, would be Rob Dingle (Offa's Dyke Path National Trail Officer) and Hannah Arndt (Access Officer/Ride North Wales). Contributions from the Let's Walk Scheme and Snowdonia National Park were currently being confirmed.

Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Consultation

The group had considered the report and responded to relevant areas.

Denbighshire's Destination Management Plan

Members of the AONB Team were now included on the group and good progress had been made.

Take the Lead Campaign

North Wales Police and the NFU had contributed to the campaign.

3.5 Sustainable Development Fund

Chair of the group Mike Skuse explained that the AONB was awarded £55,000 for 2017/18 by Welsh Government £5,000 of this was deducted for administration fees.

All the current year funding was now fully committed. However future projects were still being considered in case more funding became available.

WILD	The largest award had gone to an organisation called WILD for a feasibility study for an indoor/outdoor learning space e.g. adventure trails, forest school, mud kitchen. This would be sited on the disused tip site at Wenffrwd, Llangollen. £9,000
Community Transport	This project gave disadvantaged groups the opportunity to visit the AONB £500
	Some other interesting projects included:

Clwydian Range Archelogy Group (CRAG)	To 'buy' training for their members.
Whitebeam	(project previously mentioned)
Lost Landscapes	National Grid Project – to mitigate the impact of power transmission lines and pylons in the Morwynion Valley and Tremeirchion
Local Energy Club, Corwen	A scheme to set up a Local Energy Club in Corwen, which would run as a cooperative was under consideration, as this might lead to reduced electricity bills for some local residents the grant support was under discussion.

Mike said that because of his impaired hearing he was resigning from his role as Chair of the group.

5. Presentation – Visitor Appraisal Study

The Assistant AONB Officer explained that visitor numbers at a lot of the key sites within the AONB were increasing, with an estimated 300,000 people visiting both Loggerheads and Moel Famau annually. The Llantysilio Green area had seen a significant increase of visitors since the AONB had made improvements to access the river at the Horseshoe Falls and opened up a viewing point.

Benefits of the increase of Visitors

Some of the benefits of the increasing visitors included:

- Tourism Spend within the AONB was £39.4million
- North Wales Outdoor Sector spend of £140 million
- 8400 jobs had been created
- The NHS spend on average 1.08 billion on health issues relating to inactivity, therefore if more people go out into the countryside it would also benefit the health service.

Some of the Consequences of the Pressure

Serious and constant congestion was creating pressure on the 'honeypot' sites of the AONB, resulting in an increase of:

- Litter
- Attacks on livestock
- Erosion
- Pressure on conservation sites and the World Heritage Site
- Damage to the SAC Grasslands
- Visitor Appraisal Study

The AONB had obtained funding from the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for a study to be made examining the areas of Loggerheads, Moel Famau, Llantysilio, Trevor Basin and the Panorama, in order to investigate how the AONB could maximise the benefits of the visitors and:

- Measure the economic benefit of visitors to these areas
- Measure the social and health benefits of these areas
- Understand and measure the social and environmental impact / costs
- Develop a strategy to reduce these impacts
- Develop a strategy to help spread the benefits of visitors to these sites

Following the study a strategy would then be developed.

Discussion ensued. Issues regarding visitors to the AONB spilling on to farmland resulting in gates being left open, and stock wandering off was raised. The Assistant AONB Officer said that the AONB had recently led on the 'Take the Lead' campaign and had support from NFU and North Wales Police. A 'Responsible Access' campaign was currently being developed.

Additional car parking at sites was proposed but it was explained that this was not always possible; an example was provided of the extension of the car park at Loggerheads - only 70 additional car park spaces were agreed due to of the impact that more visitors would have on the natural grasslands and erosion issues. A larger car park was not always a viable option. A Park and Ride scheme was

suggested however, the AONB had previously piloted such a scheme and it did not prove successful. Another study on visitor spend was proposed.

In summing up the AONB Officer said that the AONB had to continue to positively welcome visitors, places like Corwen would welcome more visitors and the economic benefits they brought.

The Recreation, Tourism & Business Engagement Working Group would lead on this project.

6. **AONB Award/ AONB Volunteer Award for 2017 – 18**

The Chair explained that five nominations had been proposed this year:

1. Llanarmon yn Iâl Community Shop
2. CRAG (Clwydian Range Archaeological Group)
3. John Roberts
4. Joy Thompson
5. Ruth Evans

The Chair went on to explain that every Partnership Member had two votes

One for the AONB Award and One for the AONB Volunteer Award.

The background to the nominations would be circulated to all members by the Communication Officer. The Closing date for voting was close of play on Friday 20th October

7. **Any Other Business**

Our Picturesque Landscape (OPL) Update

The Assistant AONB Officer explained that the Heritage Lottery Fund Project had been successful at round one, and the AONB was now progressing the work necessary for round two of the £1.8 million project. The submission was due by the end of November.

The funding for the Project Officer post had now ceased, and some of the AONB Team would take the project forward.

7.1 **Wenfrwyd Site**

The planning application had been submitted and discussions were being held with Llangollen WILD. A second piece of work was the Interpretation Plan and this had now been commissioned. A Meeting would be held with the HLF monitors shortly.

Del Roberts-Jones commended all the officers for all their work, The Chair also thanked all those involved in the project.

Councillor Hugh Jones thanked Partnership members for their contribution to the Working Groups and to the AONB.

8. **Future Meeting Dates**

Friday 9th March 2018 10 am

Friday 15th June 2018 10 am