



**The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)  
Partnership  
Minutes of the Meeting held on  
Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018  
at  
St Melyd Golf Club  
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 Rural Interest

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

Meeting Observers

Alison Powell

Julie Masters

Neville Howell

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 Colin Legg (FCC)

Councillor Owen Thomas (FCC)

Councillor Paul D Jones (WCBC)

Councillor David Kelly (AONB Joint Committee)

Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer)

David Shiel (Assistant AONB Officer)

Tony Hughes (AONB Planning Officer)

Karen Weaver (AONB Communications Officer)

Ceri Lloyd (AONB Sustainable Development Officer)

Helen Mroweic (Senior Recreation 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)

Representing Wrexham County Borough Council

Allan Forrest

Anna Irwin

Apologies for absence were submitted from: -  
Councillor Christine Marston, Councillor Carolyn Thomas,

**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

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for life**  
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Councillor  
Frank

Hemmings, Councillor Merfyn Parry,  
Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones, Del Roberts-Jones, Helen Walker,

...

Gareth Wyn Jones, Phil Durrell, Paul Mitchell

## **Welcome**

The Chair opened the Spring meeting and welcomed the Chair of the Joint Committee, Councillor Hugh Jones, and Joint Committee member, Councillor David Kelly, and also new members to the Partnership, Allan Forrest (WCBC), and Councillor Owen Thomas (FCC).

## **1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

1.1 'National Eisteddfod' to be changed to 'International Eisteddfod'.

**Subject to this the minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.**

## **2. Update from the AONB Officer**

### World Heritage Site (WHS) Board

The Chair of the Joint Committee said that he had attended a WHS Board Meeting and that a key element of the Management Plan and the Master Plan was to work closely with the AONB Team.

### World Heritage Site (WHS) Conference

The conference was held in Shropshire and a site visit was made to Ironbridge. The AONB Officer and Assistant Officer had attended.

### Site Visit to Blaenafon WHS

Members of the AONB Team had undertaken a site visit along with WCBC Tourism Officer Joe Bickerton, Anna Irwin and Allan Forrest (WCBC) to Blaenafon which had been inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000. The visit had been very constructive.

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

There were now 16 AONB Champions. A meeting would be held with the Champions and Local Members on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### Wrexham Town & Community Forum

The AONB Team would make a presentation to the forum at their meeting held on 22nd March 2018.

The AONB Officer reported that members of East Cheshire Countryside Service had recently visited Loggerheads and Moel Famau, and that there had been a useful exchange of views regarding issues of mutual interest.

Meetings had been held with National Grid and Scottish Power, and the undergrounding scheme had been agreed for Ty Mawr Country Park.

He had also attended a meeting with Welsh Government to consider the some possible effects of Brexit on farming.

The AONB Officer had met with Councillor Paul Jones and Cllr Sonia Benbow-Jones (WCBC) and completed a site visit to the World Heritage Site.

### AONB Budget, Grants & Bids

He was disappointed to report that there would be a 5% cut in funding from Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

Welsh Government (WG) Funding for specific projects including:-

Project	Funding	Status
Dark Sky Initiative	£10K	Confirmed
Strengthening the partnership between the AONB/WHS	£5K	Confirmed

AONB threshold signs (Dee Valley)	£24K	Awaiting ministerial sign off
Clinca Path (near to Trevor Community Centre)	£6K	Awaiting ministerial sign off

#### Joint Committee

The next meeting would be held on June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10:00am Denbighshire County Council would host the meeting.

#### Working Group Membership

The AONB officer asked all members to consider joining a working group (if they hadn't already done so), and explained that there were now five working groups. Membership was open to professionals beyond the Partnership membership.

Partnership Working Groups:

	AONB Partnership Working Groups
1.	Landscape Character & Built Environment
2.	Land Management & the Natural Environment
3.	Recreation & Access
4.	Sustainable Tourism & Business Engagement
5.	Heritage, Culture & Communities

Members were asked to contact Karen if they would like to join a group.

#### Vacancy on the Partnership

There was a vacancy on the Partnership to represent Land Management and members were asked to share with any groups or individuals that they thought would be interested.

### **3. Update from Working Groups**

#### **Heritage Culture and working Group**

The Chair Christine Evans reported that the group had met with the new curator for Denbighshire County Council (DCC) Carly Davies.

The Clwydian Range Archaeological Group (Crag) had won the AONB Award for this year. The group had also won the Marsh Archaeology Community Award and this had been presented to them in London by Dan Snow.

Gop Cairn, Trelawnyd- The trees had been cut back and the cairn had been fenced off. There was now a clear view of the Cairn from the road.

Our Picturesque Landscape Project (OPL) - the £1,000,000 project had now achieved approval for stage two of the five year project.

The Chair thanked the County Archaeologist for all her hard work and professionalism, and wished her well in her retirement.

She hoped that the group would continue to thrive, and asked members to consider joining the group.

#### **3.1 Land Management & the Natural Environment Working Group**

The Assistant AONB Officer reported that though a meeting had been not been held since the last Partnership meeting progress had been made in several areas:-

#### National Grid (NG)- Landscape Enhanced Initiative (LEI)

This project considered options in which funding could assist to reduce the impact of the power lines and compensate for their presence, such as hedgerow planting, roadside nature reserves, pond creation, dry stone walling etc.

The AONB had one scheme that had been 'live' since March 2018, and would run for three years, working with around 12 landowners predominantly in the Morwynion Valley, and a small number in the Tremeirchion area too. Two roadside nature reserves were also included in the scheme. Work was aimed at restoring traditional boundaries, improving biodiversity and increasing moorland management on Llantysilio Mountain in order to enhance the landscape and reduce the visual impact of the electricity infrastructure.

The AONB were now in the process of preparing a second application, which would be submitted in May. The AONB were continuing to work with several of the landowners from our first application and engaging with several more. The AONB were also working with Llandegla Community Council and hoped to complete some joint working with Buglife Cymru.

#### Curlew Project

The Curlew was one of Britain's most iconic bird species. Its distinct and evocative song was a familiar sound; a harbinger of spring that is deeply ingrained within our culture. Sadly, the Curlew was currently under severe threat and faces an uncertain future throughout Wales and is fast becoming rare.

Evidence suggested that since the 1990's, Wales has lost over 80% of its breeding Curlew population. Today, there might be as few as 400 breeding pairs left in Wales and was now considered to be the most pressing bird conservation priority in the UK. It was 'Red Listed' on both the Welsh and UK Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC).

The Assistant AONB Officer explained that the Curlew were likely to disappear by 2030 and may become extinct as a breeding species. A number of bodies had come together to look at the problem and a Task Group and a North Wales group would be convened. A key issue was to create a conditions to improve nesting success.

#### **Action**

Task Group and a North Wales group to be convened

#### Welsh Government Sustainable Management Scheme

Grazing Project – the grazing scheme was for forty sites across Wales.

However no decision had been received to date on the submitted application.

#### Historic Hedgerows

Cllr David Kelly enquired whether there was any protocol regarding historic hedgerows, and raised concerns that a lot of the hedgerows were being cutback severely. The Assistant AONB Officer responded that the hedgerows and their historic value were not being mapped. However the AONB, in partnership with Farming, Wildlife Advisory Group (Fwag), had been trying to promote hedge laying and a hedge laying competition was held annually.

3.2

#### **Landscape Character & Built Environment Working Group**

##### AONB Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

Chair of the group, Cllr Martyn Holland said that a Public Consultation had been held at Loggerheads which was reasonably well attended and with good feedback provided. The SPG was being considered by the three Local Authorities and the document was expected to be adopted around June.

#### Planning Applications

Planning Applications were regularly monitored by the group and concerns continued to be expressed about comments from the AONB that had not been acted on. The group planned to follow this up

#### Dark Sky Initiative

Welsh Government had provided £10k to proceed with an application to secure the Dark Sky Community Status for the AONB.

The skies within the AONB had been measured by consultants via a Sky Quality Meter which recorded and measured the Naked Eye Limiting Magnitude (NELM). The higher the number the NELM was

the darker the sky. 6.0 NELM was considered a very dark sky. Loggerheads CP measured 5.75 NELM and the Horseshoe Pass 6 NELM (which was excellent by UK standards). A Lighting Plan would now need to be drafted, and it would be essential to have a close working relationship with the Local Authorities Lighting Teams so that future lighting schemes took account of the initiative.

A site visit to look at Moffatt dark sky project and the north Pennines was also being progressed. The AONB Champions would be involved in the application's development.

Discussion ensued. It was suggested that lighting on the periphery of the AONB should be examined, and that meetings should also be held with the Community Councils who managed their own lighting. The Assistant AONB Officer said that Joint Committee member, Cllr Carolyn Thomas was trying to coordinate a meeting with Lighting Officers to discuss street lighting and that the Welsh Government were currently considering national guidelines.

### 3.3 Recreation & Access Working Group

The Chair, Dewi Davies said that the group had agreed that there was a need to engage more with the tourism communities which has led to the decision to create a new Sustainable Tourism and Business working group. It was noted that much of the current business of the working group was around tourism and there would remain crossover of information between both groups. Concerns were raised around administrative burdens for staff and how best to link the two groups, shorter meeting notes and back to back meetings were proposed.

#### Ride North Wales and AONB Responsible Access Campaign

This campaign was the beginning of a wider Sustainable Recreation initiative. The first campaign would focus on Ruabon moorland and the access of cyclists and walkers along the moorland. With support from the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (Rowip) films and leaflets have been produced, and information for social media and infographics.

#### Visitor Appraisal Study

Funding had been secured to take the study forward. The purpose of the study was to assess the economic and social value of the six visitor "honeypot" sites across the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley and to balance this against environmental impacts to ecologically and culturally sensitive areas. The study will inform the AONB's response to increasing visitor numbers at key sites and would set out a sustainable approach to management, ensuring that the capacity and resilience of these sites were at the heart of that approach. The study would also look at how the economic and social benefits could have more outreach. The work would focus on six key sites:

1. Loggerheads CP
2. Moel Famau CP
3. Panorama
4. Castell Dinas Bran
5. Llantysilio / Horseshoe Falls
6. Trevor Basin

The Chair thanked the Senior Recreation Officer for all of her diligent work for the group.

#### **Action**

Shorter meeting notes and back to back meetings

### 3.4 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

The Sustainable Development Officer Ceri Lloyd, reported that a £55k contribution had been obtained from Welsh Government (WG) and that the group had met twice; £31k, had been committed in June and £19k at the last meeting with £5k allocated for administration.

Projects included:

Stained glass, Corwen Museum, Clwydian Range Food trail, Crag,

Whitebeam Project, Alchgwenydai, Brynegwyls Community Centre, Gwaenysgor Conservation Group  
The community of Cilcain had submitted an application to assist with a community owned shop.  
The value of smaller projects was raised at the last Joint Committee meeting.

Discussion ensued and it was queried how the funding was advertised. The Sustainable Development Officer responded that the funding was advertised in DCC County Voice (e-newsletter), and information was on the AONB Website and via social media. It was proposed that the AONB Champions inform their Community and Town Councils of the funding.

**Action**

AONB Champions be asked to inform their Town/Community Council regarding SDF funding

**4. Presentation**

**World Heritage Site Management Plan & Trevor Basin Masterplan**

Alison Powell from Arcadis Design Consultancy provided a concise PowerPoint presentation on the World Heritage Site Management Plan & Trevor Basin Masterplan.

Discussion ensued and concerns were raised regarding the brownfield site and the viability of the land if it were contaminated. Alison responded that from a marketing prospective it would depend on what the end product would be. The site would not be used for housing. Linking the Master Plan with other routes e.g. Offa's Dyke Path was also raised. The importance of the Partnership working between the AONB and WHS was emphasised.

The Chair thanked Alison for her presentation.

**5. Loggerheads Country Park Film Project**

The special heritage of the limestone landscape at Loggerheads Country Park had been captured in a short film created by pupils from Ysgol Tir Morfa Rhyl. The pupils became film writers, producers, presenters, illustrators and camera crew, with fantastic results. A second film showed the children interviewing John Morris, the Park's Ranger about the park and his work, which had a surprising twist at the end.

The Senior Recreation Officer said that the films demonstrated how the AONB delivered to communities outside the AONB. The films were funded by the Limestone Legacy Project and NRW. One of the films had been uploaded onto facebook. The films would also be shown in the cinema room at Loggerheads.

Discussion ensued and members agreed that the films should be more broadly promoted and maybe put on to memory sticks. It was proposed that the films could be used as a cinema trailer at Theatre Clwyd.

**Action**

- The films to be more broadly promoted
- To investigate if the films could be put on memory sticks
- Theatre Clwyd to be approached regarding the films being a trailer

**6. Our Picturesque landscape (OPL)Project Update**

The Senior Recreation Officer explained that the project had been successful at the second stage, and a Project Officer would now be appointed. This was a major success and the project would be a key undertaking for the AONB over the next five years.

The Senior Recreation Officer thanked all the partners who had assisted with the project and for achieving HLF grant approval. This has been a huge joint effort and required an enormous amount of dedicated work, but the potential benefits were huge.

**7. Presentation**

**Friends of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley**

The Chair of the Friends of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley, Julie Masters briefly provided some background information about the group. Good partnership working with the AONB Team had helped to 'spread the word further' about the AONB.

Julie introduced the Events Secretary, Neville Howell who gave a presentation about the group's activities. Established in 2015 it now had over 200 members. The group had a successful events programme and had assisted the AONB with several projects as well as arranging visits, talks, and themed walks. The Chair thanked both Neville and Julie for their presentation.

#### Fond Farewells

##### County Archaeologist – Fiona Gale

The Chair referred to Fiona's imminent retirement and said that she had been involved in the AONB since its inception. Had been a tower of strength to both the Partnership and the Team. Through the Heather & Hillforts Project she had brought archaeology to the people and on behalf of the Partnership he wished her a very long and happy retirement.

##### Senior Recreation Officer - Helen Mrowiec

The Chair said that Helen would be leaving the AONB Team to take up a new role with Flintshire County Council. The Chair thanked Helen for her professionalism and dedication on behalf of the AONB, and he wished her every success in her future role.

#### **8. Future Meeting Dates**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Friday 15th June 2018	at 10 am	Corwen Sports Pavilion (LL21 0DN)
Friday 5th October 2018	at 10 am	To be decided
Friday 22nd March 2019	at 10 am	To be decided
Friday 14th June 2019	at 10 am	To be decided
Friday 18th October 2019	at 10 am	To be decided