

# Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Annual Report 2017-18

## Description of Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty forms the dramatic upland frontier in North East Wales. This AONB almost touches the coast at Prestatyn Hillside in the north and stretches south as far Moel Fferna, in the Berwyn Mountains, Moel Fferna is the highest point in the AONB at **630 metres**. The AONB covers **390 square kilometres** of windswept hilltops, heather moorland, limestone crags and wooded valleys.

The Clwydian Range is an unmistakeable chain of purple heather-clad summits, topped by a cluster of strikingly situated Iron Age hillforts. The Range's highest hill at **554 metres** is Moel Famau, a familiar icon to residents of the North West. The historic Jubilee Tower sits on the summit of this hill with views over 11 counties.

Beyond the windswept Horseshoe Pass, over Llantysilio Mountain, lies the glorious Dee Valley with historic Llangollen, a famous market town rich in cultural and Industrial heritage. The River Dee flows from the market town of Corwen, now the terminus for the Llangollen Steam Railway, making its way past the focal point of Wales's third World Heritage Site, Thomas Telford's 'River in the Sky' the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

## Who Governs the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB?

### Joint Committee

The three Local Authorities of Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire entered into a legal agreement to jointly discharge their AONB functions by means of a Joint Committee for the AONB in the summer of 2014. The Committee is made up of 2 Lead members (members of the Authority's Executive or Cabinet) of each Local Authority. They have the power to act on behalf of those Local Authorities in delivering the purposes of the AONB. It is supported by an Officer's Working Group of relevant officers from the constituent local authorities and Natural Resources Wales and the AONB Partnership.

### The AONB Partnership

The AONB Partnership reports to and advises the Joint Committee in the development and delivery of the AONB Management Plan. It was established to ensure a wide range of interests are represented in planning and delivering the work of the AONB. There are 25 members representing:

Urban Communities, Rural Communities, x9 Local Authority Members (x3 Denbighshire County Council, x3 Flintshire County Council, x3 Wrexham Borough Council), Landowners, Recreation and Access and other Special Interests

**Six Working Groups have been established** to help focus the work of the Partnership in steering the delivery of the

AONB Management Plan. These are:

- Landscape Character and Built Environment
- Land Management and Natural Environment
- Historic Environment
- Tourism
- Recreation and Access
- Sustainable Development Fund

Each Working Group is able to expand its membership to beyond the partnership and can co-opt members from relevant bodies, to advise on particular aspects of work. The Land Management and Natural Environment Group for example includes the Biodiversity Officers from each of the Local Authorities and officers from the North Wales Wildlife Trust. Similarly the Historic Environment Group has co-opted representation from Cadw, the Royal Commission and CPAT.



<b>NRW Priority Themes</b> <b>Natural Resources, Well-being Goals &amp; AONB Management Plan Objective</b>	<b>Describe AONB Outputs &amp; Outcomes, supported by evidence and statistics</b>	<b>Describe how the SMNR Principles &amp; Five Ways of Working have been applied to achieve integrated delivery</b>
<p> <b>NRW Priority Themes:</b>  <u>Biodiversity</u>  <u>Physiographical features</u>  <b>WG Wellbeing Goals:</b>  <u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u>  <u>A prosperous Wales</u>  <u>A more equal Wales ability to meet</u>  <u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b>  <b>PC03,PC04,LQC01,LQC07,HSA03,WHS06,DFS01</b> </p>	<p> <b>Governance</b>  Joint Committee Meetings x3 including audited accounts <b>Average of 90% attendance</b>    Partnership Meetings x3 <b>Average of 77% attendance</b>  Working Groups:  Landscape Character &amp; Built Environment x3, Heritage, Culture&amp; Communities Working Group x 3,  Land Management and Natural Environment Working Group x 2, Recreation, Tourism and Business Engagement Working Group x 2 and Sustainable Development Fund Working Group x 2 <b>Average of 77% attendance</b>  AONB Officers Group Meetings x 2 <b>Average of 79% attendance</b> </p>	<p> <b>Principles of SMNR:</b>  <b>Building resilience</b> The AONB JC is building a strong cohesive group of members.  <b>Adaptive Management</b> All Working Groups are designed to have flexible membership  <b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> The AONB is designed to work in partnership with the LAs, WG and NRW  <b>Long Term</b> The organisational design is continuous  <b>Public Participation</b> All meetings are available to the public together with Annual meetings for Community Councils and County Councillors. An Annual Forum is held.  <b>Five Ways of Working:</b>  <b>Long term Integration Collaboration Involvement</b>  The AONB Team bring together the wide engaged membership of bodies and individuals it achieves the above goals though working together on shared objectives and aims to enhance the landscape. The AONB offers expenses to all its members </p>
<p> <b>NRW Priority Themes:</b>  <u>Biodiversity</u>  <u>Physiographical features</u>  <b>WG Wellbeing Goals:</b>  <u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u> </p>	<p> <b>Public Meetings</b>  Annual Lecture Recreation in Designated Landscapes x 50 attended  AONB Community Champions x10 attended </p>	<p> <b>Public Participation</b> All meetings are available to the public together with Annual meetings for Community Councils and County Councillors. An Annual Forum is held. </p>

<p><b><u>A prosperous Wales</u></b>  <b><u>A more equal Wales ability to meet</u></b>  <b><u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u></b>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives: PC04, BE03,LQC01,LQC07,HSA03,WHS06,DFS01</b></p>	<p>Local members and Town and community Councils Annual Meet x 16 attended</p>	<p>The AONB team outreach beyond the regular groups to the wider community and engage them to highlight working together and the opportunities that the AONB affords to its wider community</p>
<p><b><u>NRW Priority Themes:</u></b>  <b><u>Biodiversity Physiographical features</u></b>  <b><u>Minerals</u></b>  <b>WG Wellbeing Goals:</b>  <b><u>A prosperous Wales</u></b>  <b><u>A more equal Wales ability to meet</u></b>  <b><u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u></b>  <b><u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u></b>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives: BE01, BE02PC01,PC02,PC03</b></p>	<p><b>Planning Consultations</b></p> <p>The overall number of consultations referred to the AONB in 2017-18 was <b>286</b>, which shows a slight increase in activity since last year (281).The majority of consultations (212 in number, 75% of the total) were planning or related applications for development referred by the three local planning authorities (LPA's). As expected, the <b>majority (73%) were from Denbighshire</b>, followed by Flintshire (23%) and Wrexham (3%). The AONB was also consulted by Powys on one application within the setting of the protected landscape. <b>Formal and informal requests for pre and post-application advice continue to account for a significant proportion of all consultations (46 in number, 16% of the total).</b> Other consultations comprised policy related consultations (14), planning appeals (9) and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP's) (3).</p> <p>The largest category of proposals continues to be for <b>householder development (36%)</b> followed by residential (18%), including conversions. Tourism related development continued at a strong level (16%), followed by agriculture/forestry (10%). <b>The proportion of energy related applications was</b></p>	<p><b><u>Principles of SMNR:</u></b>  <b>Building resilience</b> The cumulative effect of intervention on Planning applications should be appreciated  <b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> A Landscape Working Group deals with these applications  <b>Evidence</b> see adjacent  <b>Long Term</b> continuous since 2011 over 600 planning applications have been commented on.  <b>Multiple Benefits</b>  <b>Public Participation</b>  <b>Scale</b> Across the AONB 390 square Kms  <b>Preventative actions</b> Attempts to prevent deterioration of the character of the AONB through poor planning applications  <b><u>Five Ways of Working:</u></b>  <b>Long term</b>  <b>Integration</b>  <b>Collaboration</b>  <b>Involvement</b>  Contributing to the Planning Process is a key area of work for the AONB Team, it helps communities appreciate what a fabulous landscape they live in and gives them a sense of pride. It can drive opportunities in tourism e.g. the village of Llanarmon-yn-Lal where the community own and manage a number of businesses and in particular all applications are treated equally.</p>

	<p><b>5% in 2017-18</b>, which remains at a lower level than recent years. The remaining consultations comprised utility, industrial, commercial/retail, Listed Building, advertisements, community related and minerals development. The NSIP consultations were for the discharge of detailed conditions relating to the previously approved Clocaenog Forest Windfarm.</p> <p><b>The majority of decided planning applications (86%) were granted permission</b>, which is comparable with the approval rate in previous years. Only 12% were refused, and 2% of applications were withdrawn by the applicant prior to determination.</p> <p>The AONB raised no objection to the majority of applications, but often suggested design changes, alternative materials or additional landscaping to help conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the AONB. <b>There were only ten in-principle objections lodged to development proposals</b>, and significant concerns were raised in respect of 24 further applications.</p> <p>Local Planning Authority Response to AONB Comments</p> <p>Analysis of LPA responses to substantive comments made by the AONB on planning applications shows that <b>most of the comments made by the AONB were accepted in full (42%)</b></p>	
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	<p><b>or in part (32%)</b>, which is a slight improvement on last year's position. <b>Thus 26% of comments were not accepted or acted upon</b> by the LPA's, which also represents a small improvement in the 27% of comments not accepted in the previous year. Of the 24 comments not accepted by the LPA's, 18 applications were determined by Denbighshire, 6 by Flintshire and none in Wrexham. In 2017-18 the AONB's comments on 25% of applications determined by Denbighshire were not accepted or acted upon by the planning authority, which is a significant improvement over the position last year when 36% were not accepted. <b>However, the position in Flintshire worsened considerably with 35% of comments not being accepted (6% in 2016-17)</b>, although the sample size is inevitably smaller than for Denbighshire and is therefore more sensitive to change.</p> <p>For the most part, comments made by the AONB which were not accepted related to design, materials and landscaping, and to suggestions for enhancement as part of a development project.</p>	
<p><b>NRW Priority Themes:</b>  <u>Biodiversity</u>  <u>Physiographical features</u>  <b>WG Wellbeing Goals:</b>  <u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u>  <u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b>  <b>BE03</b></p>	<p><b>Working with Utility Companies</b>  SP Energy have continued to work with the AONB Officer and have carried out the following in 2017-18  Scheme at Moel y Parc has been completed its value was £145,000 and 1.1 kms of overhead line was undergrounded. The  Scheme at Pontcysyllte Aqueduct was 275 of a Km and valued at £37,000.</p>	<p><b>Principles of SMNR:</b>  <b>Building resilience</b> the overhead network is better protected  <b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> AONB Team working in partnership with a major utility company  <b>Evidence</b> The lines are no longer a scar on the landscape enhancing views</p>

	<b>SPEN spent £183,000 on undergrounding in the AONB</b>	<p><b>Scale</b> The project is large scale in terms of kms and value</p> <p><b><u>Preventative actions:</u></b></p> <p><b>Five Ways of Working:</b></p> <p><b>Long term</b></p> <p><b>Integration</b></p> <p><b>Collaboration</b></p> <p>Improving the view making the area more tranquil by removal of these discordant man made features in high value Landscape adjacent to the ODP NT and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct</p>
<p><b>NRW Priority Themes:</b></p> <p><b><u>Physiographical features</u></b></p> <p><b>WG Wellbeing Goals:</b></p> <p><b><u>A prosperous Wales</u></b></p> <p><b><u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u></b></p> <p><b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b></p> <p><b>WHS01, WHS05</b></p>	<p><b>To Bring the WHS and AONB closer together</b></p> <p>Working together with the WHS to contribute to the Trevor Basin Master Plan x3 Meetings</p>	<p><b><u>Principles of SMNR:</u></b></p> <p><b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> The AONB Team working with WHS</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> The AONB Team will commit long term to the partnership</p> <p><b>Multiple Benefits</b> Working together creates understanding and reduces costs.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> Showing willingness of AONB Team to show public support of WHS</p> <p><b><u>Five Ways of Working:</u></b></p> <p><b>Long term</b></p> <p><b>Integration</b></p> <p><b>Collaboration</b></p> <p><b>Involvement</b></p> <p>The two designations AONB are similar in outlook and governance and working together is both logical and sensible. The communities appreciate it e.g. Clinker Path. Work is underway to cross reference where possible e.g. JC and Board and have common goals</p>
	<p><b>Attendance at various outside Meetings representing CR and DV AONB</b></p> <p>The National Park Conference in Brecon</p> <p>Following up on the work for FLW</p>	<p><b><u>Principles of SMNR:</u></b></p> <p><b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> Learning through understanding</p> <p><b>Multiple Benefits</b></p> <p><b><u>Five Ways of Working:</u></b></p>



	<p>Attendance at Denbighshire and Conwy, Flintshire and Wrexham PSBs. Wye and Gower Governance Review. Hosting visit by East Cheshire Countryside Service. Flint and Denbigh Agricultural Show. Llangollen International Eisteddfod Wrexham CBC Town and Community Council Forum. FLW Meets with NRW, WG and NPs</p>	<p><b>Long term Integration Collaboration Involvement</b> Engaging new audiences is key as opportunities arise, whilst always maintaining existing audiences.</p>
<p><b>NRW Priority Themes:</b> <u>Biodiversity</u> <u>Physiographical features</u> <b>WG Wellbeing Goals:</b> <u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u> <u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u> <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b> <b>BE03</b></p>	<p><b>NG VIP</b> Representing the Family of AONBs through the NAAONB on the National Grip Visual Improvement Project</p>	<p><b>Principles of SMNR:</b> <b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> The National Panel is working together and is chaired by Chris Baines <b>Long Term</b> If the first round is successful more will come <b>Scale</b> Across the eligible NP and AONBs of England and Wales <b>Preventative actions</b> 3 NPs and one AONB will benefit from schemes approx. value £475,000,000 <b>Five Ways of Working:</b> <b>Long term Integration Collaboration Involvement</b> Working on a landscape scale to achieve common goals and through the LEI wider benefits</p>
<p><b>NRW Priorities:</b> <u>Biodiversity</u> <u>Physiographical features</u> <b>Wellbeing Goals:</b> <u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u> <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b> <b>LGP03</b></p>	<p><b>Llangollen Whitebeam Project</b>  AONB working in partnership with Chester Zoo and NRW at Creigiau Eglwyseg. Funding secured to enable leading botanists Dr Tim Rich &amp; Libby Houston to undertake population survey of Llangollen Whitebeam (Sorbus Cunefolia). Following up from the survey will be an awareness raising exercise/publicity to draw attention to the fact that the global population of this species is centred</p>	<p><b>Principles of SMNR:</b> <b>Adaptive Management</b> - During survey, dense stands of cotoneaster observed. This invasive can be barrier to natural regeneration of S Cunefolia and AONB were able to fund contractors to undertake coordinated clearance works at relatively short notice under Limestone Legacy <b>Appropriate Scale</b> - Works focused on both sites where S Cunefolia known to exist on a</p>



	<p>here. This will be via press/social media and guided walks.</p> <p>Seed collection will also take place in September with a view to grow-on specimens. It is planned for specimen trees to be planted in key public botanical sites such as Plas Newydd, Ness Gardens and Oxford University, home of UK's Sorbus Collection. Interpretation panels and a flyer will be produced closer to the time when specimen trees will be ready for introduction to such sites.</p>	<p>global scale. Investigations may take place this season on potential host sites in locality.</p> <p><b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> Project success dependent on effective collaboration between NRW, AONB, Chester Zoo, Ness gardens and local landowners and Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> - 2 guided walks to draw people's attention to importance of area to the global population of <i>S. Cuneifolia</i>. In addition, public able to take part in an organized event this September to harvest seeds to grow-on specimens.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> - 2017's survey follows on from a previous study undertaken in 1987. The species is listed under IUCN as 'Endangered' and evidence as to where species are is crucial.</p> <p><b>Multiple benefits</b> – Opportunities to lead walks into this area of the AONB with associated health benefits – cultural benefits for Llangollen area.</p> <p><b>Preventative Action</b> - Cotoneaster clearance, seed collection will provide a reserve seed bank at Ness Gardens in case of potential disease to threaten existing population.</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - Surveys agreed to be repeated every 25 years to monitor change. Specimens to be planted in key sites such as Ness Gardens can lead to greater understanding to importance of area and may lead to an increase of visitors.</p> <p><b>Building Resilience</b> – Understanding the current population limits, expanding and securing the seed source and planting additional specimens.</p>
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		<p><b><u>Five Ways of Working:</u></b></p> <p>Long Term - Enhanced monitoring of populations, greater collaboration between organisations involved, increased awareness of public to importance of Creigiau Eglwyseg for its biodiversity importance.</p> <p><b>Prevention</b> - Climbing community aware – through BMC – to importance of site and minimize inappropriate activity which could impact upon species ( e.g. 'gardening' or attaching ropes to trees) Targeted works to remove presence of cotoneaster to allow further colonization of species through seed dispersal.</p> <p><b>Integration</b> - Seeds collected and grown-on will allow for specimen trees to be planted in key sites. Also scope for specimens to be planted in schools and residential gardens (although not in the wider countryside). Residents wishing to plant-on trees in gardens will be asked to register and record where this has taken place through Cofnod. More members using this recording system will have wider benefits.</p> <p><b>Legacy</b> - Better understanding to extent and spread of species. Better habitat conditions for species to expand. Increased public awareness to Sorbus Cunefolia, improved relationships &amp; collaborations between organisations involved. Addressing spread of INNS on key SAC in NE Wales.</p> <p><b>Collaboration</b> - Success of project dependent on a variety of organisations, landowners and volunteers.</p>
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<p><b>NRW Priorities:</b>  <u>Biodiversity</u>  <u>Physiographical features</u>  <b>Wellbeing Goals:</b>  <u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b>  <b>HMRO1, HMRO2, HMRO3, HMRO6,</b></p>	<p><b>Curlew Recovery Project</b></p> <p>Since 2017, AONB have been working with farmers in the Morwynion Valley in an attempt to try and improve breeding opportunities to the declining curlew population of the area.</p> <p>In January 2018 a workshop was held in Builth Wells (attended by 3 staff) to address the chronic decline the species faces. AONB have coordinated meetings at a NE Wales scale to try and raise awareness to the situation and ask for records of any breeding pairs in the area.</p> <p>Collaboration between RSPB, BASC, WCBC, NRW, FCC and the AONB has seen posters, press releases, several illustrated talks and farm visits to try and encourage people to send in sightings. Surveys have taken place in the Morwynion Valley with staff from above organisations and volunteers.</p> <p>In June 2018, there will be the inaugural Welsh Curlew Action Group meeting taking place at Bangor, for which the AONB have been asked to attend.</p>	<p><b>Principles of SMNR:</b></p> <p><b>Adaptive Management</b> - Partner organisations managed to meet at extremely short-notice to coordinate a realistic plan for the current nesting season in an attempt to raise awareness to the current situation and also to try and encourage people to submit details of any sightings.</p> <p><b>Appropriate Scale</b> - Welsh Curlew Action group will cover the whole nation, but on a local basis, partners are focusing on the NE Wales level.</p> <p>Collaboration and Engagement - Project success dependent on effective collaboration between NRW, AONB, FCC, WCBC, NFU, FWAG, NWWT, local landowners and the local community.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> - The project being dependent on people reporting sightings but in addition there have been several illustrated talks, press releases and a social media campaign. Posters have been circulated in local shops and pubs as well as local agricultural stores and auction markets. Volunteers have been involved with surveys too.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> - Welsh curlew have declined by over 80% in 20 years. Cofnod are key partners in the emerging project too. Public are encouraged to enter records here – or officers that they contact will input on their behalf. Long-term trends via Cofnod may help better shape future conservation works via Welsh Curlew Action Group.</p> <p><b>Multiple benefits</b>-Targeted works for curlew will benefit multiple species (e.g. other ground nesting birds). It is hoped that there is potential for some important breeding sites to be 'closed down' during the nesting</p>
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		<p>season and that this would allow better conditions for key pollinators. This year's works has enabled for greater communication and closer working with the farming community.</p> <p><b>Preventative Action</b> - AONB in collaboration with RSPB have been able to continue with corvid control in the Morwynion Valley. Control of this species may well allow for an increase in the chick survival rate. Also beneficial to local farming community with fewer lambs lost/attacked by crows last year.</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - Without intervention, curlews as a breeding species will be lost from Wales within 15 years.</p> <p><b>Building Resilience</b> – engaging farmers in habitat improvements through heathland management programmes to influence long term management – working to move curlew populations to more sustainable levels.</p> <p><b><u>Five Ways of Working:</u></b></p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - To ensure that breeding curlews – and multiple species that would benefit from targeted works – have the required conditions available so that they have a future within the North East Wales landscape.</p> <p><b>Prevention</b> - AONB in collaboration with RSPB have been able to continue with corvid control in the Morwynion Valley. Control of this species may well allow for an increase in the chick survival rate. Also beneficial to local farming community with fewer lambs lost/attacked by crows last year.</p> <p><b>Integration</b> - The AONB are currently delivering key works under the LEI (Landscape Enhancement Initiative). Much of this work is focused in the Morwynion</p>
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		<p>Valley and schemes eligible for funding may also assist in curlew recovery, or at the very least, work with farmers with birds present on their land. By working in partnership and forging positive working relationships, any future works may well be more likely to succeed.</p> <p><b>Legacy</b> - Raising awareness of the chronic decline of curlews and that they can play an important role in ensuring that the species has a future within the Welsh landscape.</p> <p><b>Collaboration</b> - Success of project dependent on a variety of organisations, landowners and volunteers.</p>
<p><b>NRW Priorities</b>  <b>Biodiversity</b>  <b>WG Wellbeing Goals:</b>  <u><b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b></u>  <u><b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving.</b></u>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b>  <b>PCO3, PCO4</b></p>	<p><b>Working with volunteers and Communities</b></p> <p>Volunteers have continued to contribute their time to engage with a diverse range of volunteering opportunities. They have been involved in important and essential maintenance at AONB sites, including the <b>Country Parks</b>, landscape projects, conservation and habitat work, access improvements and community projects. Examples include opening up views on <b>Prestatyn Hillside</b>, species surveys, improving access along <b>Offa's Dyke Path</b>, establishing a community garden and leading weekly walks.</p> <p><b>Biannual volunteer programmes</b> along with additional days providing around <b>212 public participation volunteer events</b> throughout last year, resulting in <b>800 individual volunteer days</b>.</p> <p>The AONB continues to support <b>students</b> keen to gain an insight into the work of a protected landscape, hosting <b>two placements</b> over an extended time frame. One placement joined us from <b>Chester University</b> for a 5 week placement and another placement from <b>Coleg Cambria</b> is with us for one day every week over</p>	<p><b>Adaptive Management</b> – Working with a range of community groups and developing a wide range of opportunities for people to be engaged in their local environments.</p> <p><b>Appropriate Scale</b> - Working across the whole of the AONB and Denbighshire with individuals and groups of all ages.</p> <p><b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> - The volunteer programme provides opportunities for people and communities to engage in the work of the service. Volunteers, young Rangers and student placements are important frameworks for engagement and collaboration with local colleges. Volunteer programme is a key mechanism for the engagement in key initiatives such as Himalayan balsam removal – Big Dee Day , heather management and woodland management.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> - Volunteer programme provided 212 opportunities for people to get involved in the work of the service with 800 volunteer days delivered.</p>

	<p>9 months. We also hosted week long students from a variety of high schools for their work experience. Two volunteers and their support works volunteer at Loggerheads Country Park every week to help ensure the around the Centre, cafe and Tea Garden areas are tidy and maintained for the high use they sustain.</p> <p>The AONB supported the <b>Big Dee Day Invasion</b> with around <b>25 volunteers</b> from Tesco's in Ruthin and Mold contributing to heathland management on Moel Famau as well as around 20 volunteers from Denbighshire County Councils HR department on their Away Day. Both groups spent the day clearing conifer trees off the important heathland in an area popular for black grouse.</p> <p><b>10 Young Ranger events.</b> These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Bumblebee surveying and visiting a honey bee hive at Coed Nercwys</li> <li>o A visit to the Little Tern site at Gronant</li> <li>o Abseiling at Devils Gorge</li> <li>o Loggerheads maintenance day- fixing the riverside fence line</li> <li>o Woodland skills centre visit in Bodfari</li> <li>o Heathland Management at Moel Famau</li> <li>o talk about 'unloved heritage' with Clwyd and Powys Archaeological Trust</li> <li>o Nest boxes building for pied fly catchers and dormice</li> <li>o Hedge laying in Bishops wood</li> <li>o Geophysics survey at Loggerheads with the Clwyd and Powys Archaeological Trust</li> </ul>	<p><b>Evidence</b> – volunteer activity is monitored across the Service in order to assess participation levels according to age, gender, geographical location. Programmes are then developed to address gaps – for example Young Rangers programmes.</p> <p><b>Multiple benefits-</b> Volunteer activity engages individuals and groups in important species and habitat conservation. Young Rangers programmes provide opportunities for young people to get active and have demonstrated effective pathways into employment. Volunteer programme provide important opportunities for continued social interaction, physical activity for those out of work or post retirement.</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - AONB establish long term relationships with communities and volunteers - with many volunteers contributing over many years.</p> <p><b>Building Resilience</b> - Long term relationships with communities and volunteers provides the AONB with a strong footing and essential support in taking works forward.</p> <p><b>Five Ways of Working</b></p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - AONB establish long term relationships with communities and volunteers - with many volunteers contributing over many years.</p> <p><b>Integration</b> - The AONB provides opportunities for people to get involved and help shape everything in does. Volunteering is integrated into all aspects of our work.</p> <p><b>Legacy</b> – Increased awareness of the special qualities of the landscape, increased social interaction, development of key skills, improved health.</p>
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		<p><b>Collaboration</b> - AONB work in partnership with NRW Forest Partnership, Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Glyndwr University, Chester College and Coleg Cambria in developing opportunities for people to get involved.</p>
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<p><b>NRW Priority Themes:</b>  <u>Biodiversity</u>  <b>WG Wellbeing Goals:</b>  <u>More resilient Wales</u>  <u>Prosperous Wales</u>  <u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u>  <u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b>  <b>LQC01,LQC03,LQC04</b></p>	<p><b>Dark Skies</b></p> <p>Throughout 2017 the AONB was engaged in a programme focused on the quality of the night skies. Consultants, Dark Skies Wales and Bro were engaged to develop 3 strands of work that will eventually lead to an application to the International Dark Sky Association for a Dark Sky designation. The work included: <b>Awareness raising programme</b>; 7 events were held across the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley looking at and understanding the night sky. Walks and talks were linked to the health benefits, importance to biodiversity and the economic benefits of dark night skies.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Programme</b>; The work gathered data on the quality of the night sky at over 40 locations across the AONB. This will provide a baseline for future monitoring.</p> <p><b>Stakeholder engagement</b>; – events and meeting were held with key partners including planners and street lighting technicians from the 3 Local Authorities – tourism businesses, biodiversity and conservation specialists.</p> <p><b>Recommendations and action plan for further development</b>; Recommendation to apply to IDA for Dark Sky community status. Funding applications to take this forward have been successful.</p>	<p><b>Principles of SMNR:</b>  <b>Adaptive Management</b> – working to understand the quality of the night skies across the AONB levels of artificial light impacting upon it – Lighting Plan and Dark Sky designation will help to respond to these factors.</p> <p><b>Appropriate</b> - Scale Working across the whole of the AONB and the 3 Authorities and exploring a Dark Sky designation that will work at this scale. Working in collaboration with SNP and others to link across North Wales.</p> <p><b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> – Stakeholder Engagement event to link with planners, street lighting technicians, businesses, politicians community representatives and biodiversity specialist from the outset. Collaboration with SNP and BBNP in order to share experiences, resources etc.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> – 6 events across the AONB providing opportunities for the public to experience the night skies and the biodiversity nightlife. Community participation in Dark Sky monitoring programme – training session held in Llanarmon yn Iâl.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> – Sky Quality monitoring at over 40 locations across the AONB in order to provide a strong evidence base. Monitoring using IDA methodology.</p> <p><b>Multiple benefits</b> – Quality Night Skies are shown to be essential for biodiversity – 60% of which depends on darkness for survival – Working with tourism businesses to ensure the potential to include dark skies in the tourism offer are maximised – 2 events – Community engagement events to promote</p>
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		<p>the health and wellbeing benefits for quality night skies.</p> <p><b>Preventative Action</b> – Working with Planners and street lighting technicians to develop guidance for more sensitive lighting plans – Lighting Management Plan</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - Work is aimed at achieving Dark Sky Community status with the IDA which will demonstrate a long term commitment from the 3 Authorities to quality night skies. Joint Committee for the AONB has approved this commitment.</p> <p><b>Building Resilience</b> – Working through the AONB Community Champions and 3 Local Authorities in order to foster commitment at community level.</p> <p><b>Five Ways of Working</b></p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - Work is aimed at achieving Dark Sky Community status with the IDA which will demonstrate a long term commitment from the 3 Authorities to quality night skies. Joint Committee for the AONB has approved this commitment.</p> <p><b>Prevention</b> - Working with Planners and street lighting technicians to develop guidance for more sensitive lighting plans – Lighting Management Plan</p> <p><b>Integration</b> - Lighting consideration included in planning responses, night life and dark sky walks and talks included in Out and About programme for the coming year. Dark Sky opportunities promoted by Clwydian Range Tourism Group and Denbighshire and Flintshire DMPs.</p> <p><b>Legacy</b> – Project is working towards Dark Sky community status for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley and is exploring the cumulative impact of dark sky status for landscapes across Wales.</p>
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		<p><b>Collaboration</b> - working with Planners and Street lighting technicians across the 3 Local Authorities, Business and community representatives – DMPs and Clwydian Range Tourism Group. Meetings with Snowdonia National Park in order to share resources and experiences and to maximise benefits across North Wales.</p>
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<p> <b>NRW Priorities</b>  <u>Biodiversity</u>  <b>Wellbeing Goals</b>  <u>Prosperous Wales</u>  <u>Resilient Wales</u>  <u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u>  <u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.</u>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives:</b>  <b>WHSO2,WHSO3,WHOS4,WHSO5,WHSO6</b> </p>	<p><b>Our Picturesque Landscape</b></p> <p>The AONB has been successful working with partners to develop a Landscape Partnership Scheme application to Heritage Lottery Fund called Our Picturesque Landscape. The project is centred on the Dee Valley and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site and will direct work over the next five years. The partnership is made up on Denbighshire County Council, Wrexham county council, Canal and River Trust, Cadw, Friends of the Clwydian Range, Aqueducts and Shropshire Council. The main areas that the project will focus on are:</p> <p><b>Conserving the Picturesque Landscape</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The project will restore and preserve these key views both from and into the World Heritage Site including views from Pontcysyllte, Chirk and Llantysilio.</li> <li>2) The project will work in partnership with landowners' farmers to restore field boundaries, watercourses and historic parkland features.</li> <li>3) The project will development a new gateway and access point on to the canal between Llangollen and Trevor at Wernffrwd, a former landfill site in order to help reduce pressure in other areas.</li> <li>4) The project will seek innovative solutions to reducing congestion. For example a Picturesque Bus Service will work with local bus and taxi companies to develop transport links to key visitor destinations in order to help reduce vehicular congestion and create a sense of place across the whole area.</li> <li>5) The project will seek to identify solutions to access and erosion issues at the Horseshoe Falls, particularly in relation to paddle sports</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Principles of SMNR:</u></b></p> <p><b>Adaptive Management</b> – The project will work to find solutions to recreational pressure at key sensitive sites. The project will work with farmers and landowners to develop management regimes for areas of ffridd across the De Valley – Mapping work has identified priority areas for intervention and has developed targets for management.</p> <p><b>Appropriate</b> – Working at a landscape scale across the Dee Valley ensuring that setting of the World Heritage Site and associated features are included in the project.</p> <p><b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> – Project Steering Group includes, CRT, Wrexham Council, Cadw, NRW, as well as community groups represented by Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, Aqueducts. Close working partnerships have also been developed with Llangollen Museum, National Trust, Llangollen Art Group and Wrexham Heritage Forum.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> – The development plan include a thorough programme of community consultation at events in Llangollen, Corwen, Cefn Mawr as well as on site questionnaires at castell Dinas Bran and Horseshoe Falls. The Action Plan for the project was developed from these consultation events</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> – The development Plan has a strong evidence base. Survey work has included – Habitat Connectivity, Community Consultation, and Historic Environment survey.</p> <p><b>Multiple benefits</b> – The project works across a range of themes delivering benefits for access recreation and health, tourism and</p>
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	<p>on the canal and River Dee. The project will seek to bring users together to seek positive solutions.</p> <p><b>Engaging communities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The project will focus on engaging individuals and groups from targeted communities within Denbighshire and Wrexham improving their health and wellbeing through a programme of walking-outreach events.</li> <li>2) The project will engage with communities on the edge of the World Heritage Site in the planning and development of a pocket park at Wernffrwd, former landfill site, between Llangollen and Trevor.</li> <li>3) The project will carry out physical access improvements and develop links to local communities from the World Heritage Site through the development of circular, waymarked and interpretive trails linking to key gateways sites such as Ty Mawr Country Park, Pontcysyllte and Llantysilio.</li> <li>4) The project will develop a series of educational resources that will support schools to engage with the landscape in exploring the work of Welsh artists which features at key stages 2 &amp; 3 of the National Curriculum. A series of resources for research and study of the area, for schools, colleges and special interest groups will also be developed which will include educational participation events around the theme of inspirational journeys through the Dee Valley.</li> </ol> <p><b>Accessing the Picturesque Landscape</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The project will develop new interpretation at sites that are tied closely to the production of key artworks from Richard Wilson, Turner and</li> </ol>	<p>the local economy, biodiversity and ecological resilience and well as community wellbeing.</p> <p><b>Preventative Action</b> - The project will specifically work to address issues of recreational pressure at key sites. It will also work with partners to invasive species along the river Dee.</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - The project is a five year programme that will seek to develop sustainable approaches to land management. There will be a lasting positive shift in perspective and behaviour both local people and visitors. Outcomes will be embedded within the community and within educational resources.</p> <p><b>Building Resilience</b> – The project will work towards developing a lasting positive shift in perspective and behaviour both local people and visitors. Outcomes will be embedded within the community and within educational resources.</p> <p><u><b>Five Ways of Working:</b></u></p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - The project is a five year programme that will seek to develop sustainable approaches to land management. There will be a lasting positive shift in perspective and behaviour both local people and visitors. Outcomes will be embedded within the community and within educational resources.</p> <p><b>Prevention</b> - The project will specifically work to address issues of recreational pressure at key sites. It will also work with partners to invasive species along the river Dee.</p> <p><b>Integration</b> - The Our Pictures Landscape Project brings together the objectives and aspirations laid out in the AONB</p>
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	<p>Edward Pugh, providing opportunities to walk in the footsteps of these artists.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2) The project will develop a programme of events that celebrate the industrial heritage and artistic associations of the area and encourage people to explore further afield along the World Heritage Site and surrounding landscape.</li> <li>3) The project will develop a programme of events, to include projections within the canal and events that celebrate the industrial heritage and artistic associations of the area and encourage people to explore further afield along the World Heritage Site and surrounding landscape</li> </ol> <p>The Development Plan for the project has been produced and submitted to HLF and the application has been approved – securing £1.3million for the project.</p>	<p>Management Plan and the World Heritage site Management Plan. These aims and objectives are also reflected in the DMPs for Wrexham and Denbighshire.</p> <p><b>Legacy</b> – The project will work towards developing a lasting positive shift in perspective and behaviour both local people and visitors. Outcomes will be embedded within the community and within educational resources.</p> <p><b>Collaboration</b> – A project Steering Group has been established which includes – NRW, Wrexham County Borough Council, Canal and River Trust, Cadw, AONB, Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, Aqueducts and Shropshire Council. The Project is also working with landowners and farmers, Outdoor activity providers and community groups.</p>
<p><b>NRW Priorities</b>  <b>Biodiversity</b>  <b>Wellbeing Goals</b>  <b>More resilient Wales</b>  <b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b>  <b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</b>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives: PC01,PC03,PC04</b></p>	<p><b>Corwen Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The AONB offered a broad range of activities in the Corwen area in 2017 – 18, encouraging and enabling people to learn new skills, be active, and learn about the local environment. Events have included: -</p> <p><b>14 person days over 5 days</b> of dry stone walling courses in Pen y Pigyn in May and June</p> <p><b>31 people days over 3 Young Ranger events</b> : -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exploring nocturnal Pen y Pigyn in June</li> <li>• Balsam bashing and exploring the river by coracle in August</li> <li>• Felling western hemlock and cutting back in Pen y Pigyn in March</li> </ul> <p><b>10 person days over 5 volunteering events:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installing fingerposts in Pen y Pigyn</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Principles of SMNR:</u></b></p> <p><b>Adaptive Management</b> – A Management Plan for Coed Pen y Pigyn has been drafted and agreed by NRW and the AONB. This has supported and responded to the new challenges and opportunities presented by the development of the Community Hydro Scheme.</p> <p><b>Appropriate</b> – Events focus on small groups so that a personal approach is possible, and, in the case of dry stone walling training, that proper instruction can be safely provided. Events targeted at the community of Corwen.</p> <p><b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> – Events been targeted to engage a wide cross section of people, from toddlers to the elderly. We have collaborated with a number</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balsam Bashing on Dol Corwenna</li> <li>• Repairing stone slab walling at Gro Isa</li> <li>• Hemlock clearing in Pen y Pigyn</li> <li>• Installing bird boxes at Corwen Cutting</li> </ul> <p>Over <b>100 people</b> engaged in Out and About events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Great Dinosaur Hunt in Pen y Pigyn</li> <li>• Family river dipping at Gro Isa</li> <li>• Meteorites at Night on Caer Drewyn</li> <li>• Short walks around Llangar and Caer Drewyn</li> </ul> <p>Assisting the Corwen Walking Festival with a 5km run up to Caer Drewyn and walking the North Berwyn Way.</p> <p>We have continued to support the <b>Corwen Community Garden</b> with its weekly volunteer afternoons. This has amounted to <b>63 person days over 44 events</b> and has seen very successful crops grown, harvested and shared with the Canolfan Ni, Cysgod y Gaer care home, and passers-by. A large area has been managed into a wild flower meadow which is now establishing itself. Additional events have included willow weaving with the Mind Group and a garden party for McMillan.</p>	<p>of local organisations including the South Denbighshire Community Partnership, Corwen Walking Festival, Llangollen Railway and Mind. Working in partnership with NRW through the Joint Working Partnership.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> – Engagement in Corwen has focused on encouraging public participation in events and opportunities to get involved in the work of the AONB and NRW.</p> <p><b>Multiple benefits</b> – The project works across a range of themes delivering benefits for access recreation and health, tourism and the local economy, biodiversity and ecological resilience and well as community wellbeing.</p> <p><b>Long Term</b> – By working with the Corwen Community Partnership, Canolfan Ni and other established groups in Corwen the project will build the capacity of these groups to invest further into their local environment and to and to remain practically engaged.</p> <p><b>Building Resilience</b> – The project is working to build capacity in the community to remain engaged in local environmental projects. The project has worked with local groups such as MIND for whom this type of engagement can bring long term benefits</p> <p><b>Five Ways of Working</b></p> <p><b>Long Term</b> - By working with the Corwen Community Partnership, Canolfan Ni and other established groups in Corwen the project will build the capacity of these groups to invest further into their local environment and to and to remain practically engaged.</p> <p><b>Integration</b> – The project is linked to the South Denbighshire Community Partnership and is supporting the work of other groups</p>
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		<p>such as MIND and Canolfan Ni and Corwen Community Hydro.</p> <p><b>Legacy</b> – The project is working to build capacity in the community to remain engaged in local environmental projects. The project has worked with local groups such as MIND for whom this type of engagement can bring long term benefits</p> <p><b>Collaboration</b> – The project is operated under a partnership with NRW and is working alongside South Denbighshire Community Partnership and Denbighshire's Housing section.</p>
<p><b>NRW Priorities:</b>  <u>Biodiversity</u>  <b>Wellbeing Goals</b>  <u>A more resilient Wales</u>  <u>A Wales of cohesive communities</u>  <u>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</u>  <b>AONB Management Plan Objectives</b>  <b>HM03</b></p>	<p><b>Species Monitoring</b></p> <p><b>Reptile surveys</b>  We have been working in collaboration with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation to survey Prestatyn Hillside and Gwaenysgor, to find out what reptiles are present in the area. Before the surveys had taken place there were no formal records of any reptiles in the area. ARC provided us with survey mats that have been put out in Gwaenysgor and on Prestatyn Hillside. After a short training session with the local community volunteers, these mats are now being monitored by local people. To date we have found a good population of Common lizard. Surveying will continue in the hope of finding slow worms, grass snakes or even adders. Knowing what species are in the area will allow us to manage the site with them in mind.</p> <p><b>Butterfly surveys</b>  Butterfly transects have been set up at Loggerheads Country Park and Prestatyn Hillside using Butterfly monitoring scheme methodologies. These surveys will help to show habitat management success of these two sites. This data will not only allow us to monitor</p>	<p><b>Adaptive Management</b> – The AONB is building a programme of key species associated with the special habitats of the AONB. This will inform and help to fine tune the management of these habitats.</p> <p><b>Appropriate Scale</b> – Species monitoring is taking place across all key habitats across the AONB, heathland sites, grassland site and woodland sites and are targeting priority species.</p> <p><b>Collaboration and Engagement</b> – The AONB has been working with key partners – Butterfly conservation, NRW, ARC and RSPB, Cofnod.</p> <p><b>Public Participation</b> – A key element of the approach is to work with communities and volunteers. Gwaenysgor Community, Young Rangers and Countryside Service volunteers.</p> <p><b>Evidence</b> – The programme is aimed at establishing a strong evidence base for habitat and species conservation work undertaken.</p>

population on our own sites but will also feed into Butterfly Conservation's national survey to help monitor butterfly population trends throughout the UK.

The Loggerheads Country Park transect was set up in February 2017 and was surveyed throughout the season. 22 different species were recorded in one transect with 3 being Species of Principal Importance. A butterfly report has been written and put in the information centre for visitors to read.

The Prestatyn hillside transect was set up at the end of 2017. Training of local people has taken place and that transect is now being monitored by volunteers. Data will be analysed at the end of the 2018 season. It is hoped more transects will be started within the AONB by trained volunteers. Getting volunteers involved has made surveying more sustainable and also educated a new audience.

#### **Newt Surveys**

Two newt surveys have been carried out at both Moel Findeg and Coed Nercwys to provide evidence that habitat management techniques are working. Results include:

<b>Nercwys newt totals from two surveys</b>	
<b>Species</b>	<b>Number seen</b>
Great Crested newt	3
Smooth newt	1
Palmate newt	34
Unidentified small newt	234
Frog	10
Toad	21

**Multiple benefits** – The programme is working to engage communities and volunteers in their local environments and to be active in its conservation – health benefits, education and biodiversity.

**Preventative Action** – Reducing the impact of road traffic on toad and frog populations – raising awareness of the impacts. Targeting species conservation to where species loss is a real concern.

**Long Term** – Building on what is already a long term monitoring programme for some species – black grouse, GCN in order to build a clear picture of population densities.

**Building Resilience** – Greater understanding of population densities of key species will help to target habitat works that will move towards sustainable populations

#### **Five Ways of Working**

**Long Term** - Building on what is already a long term monitoring programme for some species – black grouse, GCN in order to build a clear picture of population densities.

**Prevention** - Reducing the impact of road traffic on toad and frog populations – raising awareness of the impacts. Targeting species conservation to where species loss is a real concern.

**Integration** – Integrating monitoring across a range of project throughout the AONB including youth projects and community projects. Working with Cofnod and linking to Prestatyn Hillside – national black grouse recovery project.

**Legacy** – A core set of data tracking species decline / recovery which will inform future management of key habitats.

**Moel Findeg newt totals from two surveys**

Species	Number seen
Great Crested newt	65
Smooth newt	27
Palmate newt	99
Unidentified small newt	32
Frog	1
Toad	6

**Toads in the Road**

A toad crossing in Llandegla (Ruthin road) was managed by AONB staff and supported by North East Wales Wildlife. On this particular stretch of road, hundreds of toads get killed by cars each year while making their way to their ancestral breeding ponds. On warm evenings in the spring, volunteers walked up and down the road picking up the toads and safely crossed them over at peak traffic times.

Toad crossing data	
Toads saved	1404
Toads killed	685
Frogs saved	33
Frogs killed	22
Palmate Newts saved	1
Palmate newts killed	3

**Pied Fly Catchers**

The Young Ranger group built 20 new bird boxes to go up at Loggerheads Country Park. These were for a mixture of different bird species but in particular the Pied Fly catchers. After being put up some boxes were blocked so they did not become occupied by other birds before the Pied Fly catchers arrived later in the season. Posters have been put up to educate the public about these birds and to encourage sightings to

**Collaboration** – Working with a range of partners, NRW, RSPB, ARC, Butterfly Conservation farmers and landowners.

	<p>be reported to the rangers. Monitoring of the boxes will take place over the coming year.</p> <p><b>Black grouse</b>  Annual monitor took place again this year with the AONB leading on surveys on Clwydian Range and supporting surveys on Llantysilio Mountain, Ruabon and North Berwyn. Numbers for the Clwydian Range continue to grow with 41 males counted – compared to 38 last year and 25 in 2016.</p>	
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