

CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Friday, 22 June 2018 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors: Tony Thomas (Chair) and Julian Thompson-Hill (DCC)
Councillor: Carolyn Thomas (FCC)
Councillors: Hugh Jones and Carolyn Thomas (WCBC)

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors Melvin Mile and Emrys Wynne (DCC)

Karen Weaver (AONB Communications Officer), Ceri Lloyd (AONB SDF Officer), Paul Mitchell (Natural Resources Wales), Helen Mrowiec (Senior Recreation Officer), Paula O'Hanlon (Senior Finance and Assurance Officer, DCC), Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer), David Shiel (Assistant AONB Officer), Michael Skuse (AONB Partnership and Friends of AONB), Gary Williams (Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services, DCC), Gareth O Williams (Finance Manager, DCC), and Andy Worthington (Chair of AONB Partnership).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Derek Butler

1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Apologies were received from Councillor Derek Butler (Flintshire County Council).

Three were no declarations of interest submitted.

The outgoing Chair asked all the attendees to introduce themselves.

2 ELECTION OF CHAIR

The outgoing Chair Councillor Hugh Jones (WCBC) nominated Councillor Tony Thomas (DCC) to succeed him as Chair of the AONB Joint Committee, the nomination was seconded by Councillor Carolyn Thomas (WCBC) and the vote carried unanimously.

Councillor Hugh Jones (WCBC) expressed his pleasure to have been Chair and thanked Councillor Carolyn Thomas for the foundations she had set previously as Chair and ongoing support. He also thanked officers for their dedication and enthusiasm.

Councillor Tony Thomas thanked Councillor Jones for his service and echoed his gratitude to the officers who had assisted him from the partnerships. Councillor Thomas ruminated over the past 12 months as a Councillor, commenting at the steepness of the learning curve and visiting places he never knew existed with AONB officers.

3 MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2ND FEBRUARY 2018

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 2 February 2018 were submitted.

Matters arising

Item 5, page 4, Karen Weaver (AONB Communications Officer) had successfully convinced Theatr Clwyd to use the two AONB short films presented by Helen Mroweic (Senior Recreation Officer) as trailers to their feature films.

Item 9, page 7, two grants had been agreed for signage by the Trunk Road Agency and a meeting had been held with Trefor Community to discuss the Clinker Path.

Item 11, page 7, Councillor Hugh Jones had written to the Minister requesting the frequency of litter clearance from the 3 trunk roads (A55, A494 and A5)/

The Committee discussed the state of various trunk roads and debated who was responsible financing the clearing of litter? Councillor David Kelly commented that it was the cutting of the undergrowth that revealed the litter and therefore the clean-up should come out of the Trunk Road Agency's budget. The Committee discussed the merits of reducing the amount of cutting of vegetation and instead investing that money into litter removal. It was agreed that the Councillor Hugh Jones would forward the letter sent to the Minister to the Chair to chase up.

RESOLVED:

- I. That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair and*
- II. The Chair seeks a response to the litter clearance query from the Minister.*

4 DRAFT MINUTES OF AONB PARTNERSHIP HELD 9TH MARCH 2018

The Chair congratulated Andy Worthington (AW) for his reappointment as Chair to the AONB Partnership and asked him to update the Committee on the Partnership's work.

Referring to the Partnerships minutes (previously circulated) he commented on:

- I. Depletion of the Curlew population
- II. The division of the Recreation and Tourism Working Group into separate groups
- III. Presentation by Ceri Lloyd on the SDF
- IV. Appointment of consultant to appraise visitor sites and

V. Seeking applications for outstanding contribution for the AONB Award.

AW also brought up the recent correspondence from Hannah Blythyn AM seeking feedback from existing designated Areas of Natural Beauty whether they wanted parity with National Parks going forward. The Committee wish for a future report on the pros and cons of the designation National Park.

The AONB Partnership had asked Officers to produce a feasibility report / SWOT analysis on potential designation as a National Park to be brought back to October's meeting. The Committee were asked for an endorsement to continue research which was agreed. It was also agreed to add an item on National Parks to the next AONB Joint Committee meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- I. the AONB Partnership minutes be noted;*
- II. the Committee endorsed the Partnership's further research into National Park designation and*
- III. Update on research on National Park status be added as an item to the AONB Joint Committee forward work programme.*

5 JOINT COMMITTEE BUDGET

DCC's Finance Manager (GW) introduced the report on the Joint Committees Outturn and Accounts 2017/18 & Budget 2018/19 (previously circulated).

Members were asked to note the financial outturn for 2017/18 (Appendix 1) and formally approve the 2018/19 budget (appendix 2). Members were also asked to review and sign, the Annual Return for 2017/18 (Appendix 3) and note the Reserve Balances as at 31st March 2018 (Appendix 4).

Councillor Carolyn Thomas referred to the large discrepancy in the budget and outturn for Site Management in appendix 1. The AONB Manager (HS) explained that they were going through a transitional period, that some work from the end of the previous year had been carried forward and any unused funds were used for contingency management plans.

Members agreed that the total expenditure of £176,341 showed excellent value for money.

RESOLVED that:

The Financial outturn for 2017/18 and reserve balances at 31st March 2018 be noted and the 2018/19 Budget be approved.

6 REPORT ON SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

The AONB Officer (HS) introduced the report (previously circulated) informing the Committee that all three local planning authorities (DCC, FCC & WCBC) had adopted the Supplementary Planning Guidance and asked that the Committee approved the attached document (appendix 1).

RESOLVED: *that the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Supplementary Planning Guidance be approved.*

7 AONB HIGHLIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT

The AONB Officer (HS) explained that as a statutory committee there was a requirement to produce the annual report (previously circulated). Referring to the report he highlighted:

- various (average) attendance rates:
 - Joint committee meetings – 90%
 - Partnership meetings – 77%
 - AONB Officer Group meetings – 79%
- A slight increase in planning applications and
- A number of schemes completed with SP Energy – including £145k at Moel y Parc and £37k at Pontcysyllte Aquaduct.

The AONB Manager informed the Committee that Clare Pillman – Chief Executive Natural Resources Wales – had committed to liaise on their behalf with Dwr Cymru regarding the sewerage treatment works below the aquaduct.

Updating the Committee on the World Heritage Site masterplan the AONB Manager announced that the work was progressing well, particularly the engagement with local communities.

RESOLVED: *that the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB annual report 2017/18 be endorsed.*

8 HIGHLIGHTS OF WORK OF RANGER TEAM 2017-18

The Assistant AONB Officer (DS) gave a Powerpoint presentation on the work of the Ranger Team.

In response to Member's questions he confirmed that:

- Whilst there were areas with Japanese Knotweed it was not as invasive as Himalayan Balsam in the AONB.
- The Partnership looked at all invasive species and developed a response to them.
- The Bull Toad was not yet a problem in North Wales as it has become in other parts of the UK.
- There were various group of volunteers established throughout the AONB – an exhibition of their work could be displayed at the oriel / gallery at Loggerheads.
- There had not been any incidents of Alabama Foot Rot reported in the AONB.
- Rangers spent a lot of time educating dog walkers on 'fouling', but were not responsible for fining owners who fail to pick up after their dog.
- There was not currently a policy on 'stick and flick', a discussion on the policy would be required with NRW and Coed Nercwys.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas asked if the Friends of the AONB could come in and give the Committee an update?

The Chair thanked the Assistant AONB Officer for the comprehensive presentation.

RESOLVED that:

- I. *the work of the Ranger Team be noted and*
- II. *the Friends of the AONB be invited to provide an update on their work at a future Committee.*

9 UPDATE OUR PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE

The Assistant AONB Officer (DS) advised the Committee that the Heritage Lottery Fund had granted £2.1m to be spent over the next 5 years. In return the HLF had requested:

- amendments to the job description of the officer's roles;
- provision of further detail for the proposed first year's work;
- explanation on how the structure feeds into the AONB Joint Committee and the World Heritage Site board?

There were a number of tasks that needed completing in the first six months, including:

- the former tip site at Llangollen
- engaging communities
- considering the risk register and
- establishing accommodation for staff in the Dee Valley (Froncysyllte).

Councillor David Kelly advised that there was a vacant building at the Minera Visitor Centre that might be considered.

RESOLVED: *that the update be noted.*

10 HIGHLIGHTS AND SUMMARY REPORT 2017-18 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

The AONB Sustainable Development Officer (CL) gave a presentation to summarise of the activities of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB's Sustainable Development Fund relating to the Management Plan's Priorities in 2017/18

The Welsh Government provided £50k last year for activities that supported 19 individual projects, 3 jobs and over 3000 volunteer hours. The match funding contribution – public cash, private cash and time in kind amounted to almost £272,500.

The SDF was linked to the Management Plan priorities, SDF have objectives set by Welsh Government that included:

- Creation of job or jobs supported;
- Volunteering opportunities;
- Deliver training or awareness raising sessions on sustainability and
- Maintain high level funding levered in from public, private and voluntary sector.

The AONB Sustainable Development Officer went on to demonstrate how SDF projects were contributing towards the AONB's Management Plan priorities (Page 97 of Management Plan). An annual report would be submitted at the end of June, a copy of which will be shared with the Committee.

Responding to Members questions the AONB Sustainable Development Officer confirmed:

- WG had confirmed the same funding for next year, which gave an opportunity to plan further ahead than usual.
- The grant received from WG was the same as other AONB and
- Referring to the Community Transport Scheme, a log was kept that would be provided for information purposes.

RESOLVED:

- I. *That the presentation be noted and*
- II. *The Community Transport Scheme log be forwarded to the Committee*

11 SUMMARY OF AONB PLANNING CONSULTATIONS SEPTEMBER 2017 TO MARCH 2018

The AONB Officer (HS) referred to the report for information purposes only.

RESOLVED: *that the report be accepted.*

12 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The AONB Manager (HS) presented the Forward Work Programme (previously circulated) and reported on the main items scheduled for consideration. He advised Members that contrary to usual Red, Orange and Green Status indicators, in this format red did not indicate an item in trouble but one that hadn't started.

RESOLVED: *that the Forward Work Programme be noted.*

13 FUTURE MEETING DATES AND 23RD NOVEMBER 2018

The Committee were reminded that the next meeting of the AONB Joint Committee would be held on Friday 23 November at 10:00am in Wrexham.

(The meeting closed at 12:00pm)