



The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
Partnership
Minutes of the Meeting held on
Friday 12th October 2018
at
Llangollen Pavilion
at 10:00 am

AONB Partnership Members

Representing Access and Recreation

Andrew Worthington OBE Chair

Representing Rural Interest

Christine Evans, Roger Cragg

Representing Business Interest

Dewi Davies

Representing Landscape Interest

Michael Skuse

Representing Historical Interest

Tony King

Representing Urban Interest

Ian Papworth, Del Roberts Jones

Representing the Natural Environment

Les Starling

Representing Land Management

Sandy Archdale

Representing Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

Councillor Tony Thomas AONB Joint Committee

Councillor Huw L Jones DCC

Councillor Frank Hemmings WCBC

Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones WCBC

Councillor Martyn Holland DCC

Councillor Christine Marston DCC

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

Rhun Jones AONB Senior Countryside Warden

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Huw Rees Head of Countryside & Heritage Services

Representing Flintshire County Council

Tom Woodall Head of FCC Countryside Service & ROW

Representing Wrexham County Borough Council

Anna Irwin, Allan Forrest

Representing Natural Resources Wales

Paul Mitchell

Apologies for absence were submitted from: -

Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Councillor Hugh Jones, Councillor David Kelly, Councillor Colin Legg,
Councillor Paul Cunningham, Councillor Paul Jones,

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i fyw
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{ BRYNIAU CLWYD A
DYFFRYN DYFRDWY
Un o'r
Teulu AHNE

{ CLWYDIAN RANGE
AND DEE VALLEY
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Phil
Durrell,

Gareth Jones, John I Roberts, Helen Walker

Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the autumn meeting of the Partnership. He also welcomed the substitute member for WCBC, Councillor Frank Hemmings.

Resignation of Member

The Chair said that due to family and other commitments Helen Walker had resigned from the Partnership.

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 15th June 2018

The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Communication Officer for the completion of the minutes.

2. Update from Working Groups

An update from the Chair of the Working Groups

2.1 Heritage, Culture & Communities Working Group

The AONB Officer had taken over the role of lead officer for the group following Fiona Gale's retirement. The Chair of the Group, Christine Evans, reported that The Group had acquired two new members, Fiona Grant (Cadw) and Chris Jones (AONB Champion and Corwen & Dee Valley Archaeological Society CADVAS). She noted that:

- ❖ Undergrounding of Lines
Scottish Power Energy Networks
Undergrounding work had commenced near to the Horseshoe Falls. The area around Llangar Chapel, the Shelf and above Llangollen at Fron Bache were now being considered. National Grid were also considering the eligibility of the line between Legacy to Nercwys (this was just outside the AONB boundary but is within the setting of the protected landscape). Gillespie's would be completing a Landscape Character Assessment.
- ❖ Tomen y Rhodwydd
The gorse has become problematic at the site, badgers were also present, and rehousing of the badgers was currently being considered.
- ❖ Our Picturesque Landscape (OPL) appointments
The Chair explained that two appointments had been made:

Project Officer

Kate Thomson had been appointed as the OPL Partnership Officer. Kate started her career as part of Wrexham's Countryside Service, and was currently working with NRW as the National Co-ordinator for the Plant Initiative (this project arranges for a tree to be planted for every child born in Wales). Prior to that Kate was part of NRW's and the Forestry Commission Wales' Education Team

Community Officer

Sallyanne Hall had been appointed as the OPL Community Officer. Sallyanne had previously worked for High Weald AONB, Kent, and she was currently working for Groundwork in Deeside on Community Engagement Projects.

Communication Officer

This post was still outstanding

The Project Officer and Community Officer would commence work on November 1st.

- ❖ Drones on Scheduled Sites – Drones on Schedules Sites had been discussed and it was proposed to erect signs at certain sites to inform that drones were not allowed.

- ❖ Archaeological Dig at Chirk Castle - Ian Grant would attend the next meeting to provide feedback on the dig which was in close proximity to the Offa's Dyke Path near to Chirk Castle.

2.2

Land Management & the Natural Environment Working Group

Update on the Curlew Cymru Project

The Chair of the Group, Les Starling, explained that one of their key projects was the Curlew Cymru Project, and introduced Senior Countryside Ranger Rhun Jones who provided an update. Rhun, and WCBC Ecology & Biodiversity Officer, Emma Broad, were the lead officers for the project. A Task Group had been convened and a productive meeting had recently been held. A North Wales wide group were considering how farming had evolved and how this affected the Curlew population, and Rhun had a seat on this group. The RSPB were submitting a funding application to Welsh Government on behalf of the group. Rhun reported that in the North East Wales area 75 sightings of the birds had been recorded via Cofnod, and this data could now be monitored. Going forward one of the targets for the group was to work proactively with the farming communities to help maintain the habitat mosaic and vegetation structure favoured by curlew.

Discussion ensued. Rhun explained that if funding was successful two posts would be created to take the project forward, and a key role of the post would be 'effective predator control'. Debate was held regarding what effective predator control entailed, and Rhun explained that one possibility was to extend the lambing season to June/ July to assist the nesting birds, and another method was trapping, and field security enhancements through the provision of electric fencing. Rhun reiterated that predator control would not solve all of the problems associated with the Curlew.

This item was ongoing.

2.3

Landscape Character & Built Environment Working Group

Dark Sky Initiative

Chair of the Group, Councillor Martyn Holland reported that the Welsh Government were providing funding to explore all the Welsh protected landscapes working collaboratively towards a possible 'Dark Sky Nation'. Snowdonia National Park would lead on the project in North Wales, and a Project Officer would shortly be appointed.

Learning Journey

A site visit was planned to the North Pennines AONB. They have 16 Dark Sky Discovery Sites, and were hosting a Dark Sky Festival at the beginning of November. Individuals that would best serve the project to be invited.

Lighting Plan

The Assistant AONB Officer explained that a meeting had been held with all three Local Authorities regarding street lighting. He explained that LED light temperature/colour was measured in kelvin and that the recommendation from the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) was for 3000 kelvin. DCC had now changed to 3000 kelvin and it was hoped that WCBC and FCC would follow. Discussion ensued, and it was recognised that a large amount of Community Councils were responsible for street lighting. Cefn Mawr and Gwaenysgor & Trelawnyd Community Councils were currently in the process of updating their lighting and required advice.

Action

- ❖ The Assistant AONB Officer to contact the Community Councils
- ❖ AONB Champions to be provided with a copy of the SPG to share with Community Councils

Welsh Government Consultations

The group had considered the AONB's response to a large number of Welsh Government consultations over recent months including:

- ❖ Petroleum Extraction Policy Wales Consultation
- ❖ Achieving our Low Carbon pathway to 2030
- ❖ Noise and Soundscape Action Plan 2018 – 2023
- ❖ Delivery of Housing through the planning system

Planning Consultations

The Chair commented that the group do not often object to applications, but in many cases provide recommendations to enhance development. A recent presentation to the group by Ian Weaver, DCC Principal Planning Officer, had covered this aspect in some detail including consideration of a number of case studies. He explained that the Planning Committee had to reach a balanced view of all submitted comments, however, in his view the tone of the AONB comments was appropriate, especially with the added support of the recently adopted SPG.

The group had been reassured that the AONB comments were being considered and in most cases taken on board by the Planning Authorities.

2.4 **Recreation, Enjoyment & Understanding Working Group**

The Chair of the Group, John Roberts was unable to attend the meeting and Ian Papworth delivered the update. Ian reported that one meeting of the newly formed group had been held to date, and draft Terms of Reference had been agreed.

It was agreed that the group would still work closely with the Sustainable Tourism and Business Engagement Working Group in order to meet the objectives of the Management Plan.

2.5 **Sustainable Tourism & Business Engagement Working Group**

Chair of the Group, Dewi Davies reported that:

- ❖ The Terms of Reference had been agreed for the group
- ❖ The Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2015-20 would be a standard agenda item for the group

Visitor Appraisal Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the economic and social value of six visitor "honeypot" sites across the AONB and to balance this against environmental impacts to ecologically and culturally sensitive areas.

The sites were:

1. Loggerheads Country Park
2. Moel Famau Country Park
3. Horseshoe Falls
4. Trevor Basin
5. Panorama
6. Chirk Aqueduct and Tunnel area

The study would 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 was at the heart of that approach. The study would also examine how the economic and social benefits could be spread wider. New Economic Foundation (NEF) had been appointed to complete the study.

AONB Forum

The AONB's Annual Forum would be held at Springs, Llanrhaeadr on the 8th November 2018.

The theme was 'Sustainable Tourism and Business Engagement'. The AONB had partnered up with the Clwydian Range Tourism Group who would also hold their autumn meeting prior to the Forum,

as well as two local food and drink groups; Clwydian Range Food and Drink and the Llangollen and Dee Valley Good Grub Club. All were invited to attend both events.

2.6 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Working Group

Chair of the Group, Mike Skuse, firstly thanked the Assistant AONB Officer and the Sustainable Development Officer for all of their diligent work on SDF projects.

He went on to report that:

- ❖ £55k funding was granted by Welsh Government (£5k of this contributed to administration fees)
- ❖ Eleven projects had been approved by the SDF Group at the May meeting to a total value of around £38k
- ❖ £1,500 each was given to fund Liverpool University's dig at Penycloddiau and Oxford University's dig at Moel y Gaer Bodfari

Local Energy and the Local Energy Club, Corwen

This application was for £7k allocated over three years. The scheme involved buying reduced electricity firstly, from the Corwen Hydro Scheme, then from other similar schemes. In order for residents to join the scheme it was essential that they had a smart meter fitted. Some members had reservations about the scheme, therefore further assistance was deferred. Cadwyn Clwyd (Co funders) completed a presentation on the scheme however, only three members of SDF Group attended, which was very disappointing. Members were reassured that the core of the scheme was to help communities, and other similar schemes were currently being developed. Moreover, the AONB could be seen as cutting edge of this new way of looking at the distribution of electricity.

New projects

There were five new projects (that would be reported on at the next meeting):

- ❖ Flintshire Rural Skills (joint project with FCC)
- ❖ Cilcain School Scoping Study
- ❖ Reducing the use of single use plastic
- ❖ Corwen Community Garden
- ❖ Handmade wool fleeces

3. Llantysilio Mountain Fire

The Assistant AONB Officer, David Shiel reiterated that his update focused solely on role of the AONB.

Background

The fire was started as part of a planned burn by a landowner which got out of control, it was noted that the burn was outside of the Welsh Government guidelines between October and April. The fire burned from 18th July till September 4th (The fire burnt underground until September) with 730 acres of land affected. Fire watchers were problematic, and the Horseshoe Pass had to be closed and stayed closed for a month. The fire service had completed a fantastic job.

Role of the AONB Rangers

The AONB Rangers had experience in carrying out controlled burns on the moorland (through heather burning) and had specialist equipment 'fire foggers', which the Fire Service did not have. The AONB Rangers were very familiar with the mountain and were able to guide the Fire Service on how to access certain areas, they also worked with DCC and NRW on firebreaks. The AONB Rangers assisted the fire service to try and extinguish hotspots of fire. The fire was a pressure on the AONB Staff at the time, and the fire burnt underground until September.

Nature Recovery

The Assistant AONB Officer had met with NRW and NFU to discuss nature recovery. In large areas bracken and gorse would grow back, however, soil loss would be a problem. A meeting would shortly be held with the graziers.

The LEI and the Curlew Project would assist in the management of the landscape.

Discussion ensued. A member said that that the general feedback from the local community was some dissatisfaction with the land management of the mountain and the lack of information and communication at the time that the fire was burning. David responded that a full Multi Agency debrief would be held and communication would be discussed, he went on to explain that it had been difficult to keep farmers farming on the mountain, however, land management had not been prevented, and both RSPB and NRW had worked with farmers to complete land management.

In Summing up the Chair said that a multi-agency report would be completed following the fire, and when the report was complete the Partnership could add to the comments.

Cllr Martyn Holland said that the AONB should be congratulated for all of the hard work that they had completed, and if any member of the group had any further comments to bring to his attention.

4. **AONB Award 2019**

The Chair introduced the four nominations for this year's AONB Award:

1. Community Shop, Llanarmon yn Ial
2. North Wales Wildlife Trust
3. Llanarmon yn Ial Conservation Society
4. Corwen Community Garden

Members voted and it was unanimously decided that Corwen Community Garden should be given the award for 2018/19

Action

- ❖ Corwen Community Garden members to be informed that they had won the AONB Award
- ❖ A date to be arranged for the award to be presented

4.1 **AONB Volunteer Award**

Senior Countryside Ranger Rhun Jones introduced the nomination, John Lawton Roberts, explaining that John had devoted much of his life in the pursuit of recording, watching and reporting on birds in Northeast Wales. His boundless enthusiasm and expertise had helped paint a detailed picture to the changes to bird populations in the area spanning a period over 40 years. John had been a great asset to the AONB.

Action

- ❖ That John Lawton Roberts would receive the Volunteer Award for 2018/19
- ❖ A date to be convened for John to receive the Award

5. **Future Landscapes Wales**

The Review of Designated Landscapes and the Future Landscapes Wales Programme: (letter previously circulated)

The Chair explained that Hannah Blythyn AM had invited comments regarding 'Greater Parity between Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks' from the five AONB Officers of the protected landscapes in Wales and together with NRW a joint response had been submitted. Once a response had been received this item would be considered further.

This item was ongoing.

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

The Assistant AONB Officer, David Shiel said that the formal permission to start has taken longer than anticipated. Two appointments had been made (previously reported), and he thanked the OPL Steering Group for their assistance with the appointment process. The OPL Team would be based at Y Caban, Plas Newydd and a meeting would be held shortly.

7. Update from the AONB Officer

Nature for Health

The AONB Officer informed of a joint venture by Denbighshire Countryside Services and the Denbighshire County Council Housing Department, this project promoted the well-being benefits associated with being outside in the natural environment. Based in areas of social housing and community centres (in Rhyl, Llangollen, Corwen) the scheme would use environmental social prescribing and GP referrals to encourage communities to access and enjoy their local greenspaces. It was hoped that the scheme would be extended to Cefn and Chirk areas.

DCC Chief Executive Visit to Loggerheads

Chief Executive Officer, Judith Greenhalgh, along with Corporate Director Economy and Public Realm Officer Graham Boase, and Head of Planning and Public Protection Officer, Emlyn Jones had recently visited Loggerheads Country Park and had met with some of the Team.

Management Plan & Governance Seminars

The AONB Officer and Assistant AONB Officer had completed several seminars to examine different Management Plans and governance. The AONB were also assisting the Sandstone Trust with governance.

Fixed point photography

The AONB Officer had noticed fixed point photography points in Pembroke National Park and said that it was an excellent way to of monitoring landscape change.

Pontcysyllte Treatment Works.

The AONB Officer had convened a meeting with Steve Wilson, Dwr Cymru regarding mitigation for the treatment works.

World Heritage Site Board

The AONB Officer had attended ta WHS Board Meeting along with Allan Forrest WCBC.

NAAONB Outstanding Week

Outstanding Week was organised by the National Association of AONB's (NAAONB) and held annually in September to celebrate all AONB's in England and Wales. It entailed all AONB's providing a week long programme of events held in all of the AONB's. As part of our contribution the AONB Officer led 3 walks covering the entire World Heritage Site and Buffer zone, and there was good attendance on all walks.

8. Any Other Business

Cllr M Holland noted that the Chair had to stop some of the debates held today because of time restraints and proposed if more time could be given to meetings.

AONB Ranger – Vicky Knight

Ian Papworth extended his sincere thanks to Vicky Knight for all of her hard work in Gwaenysgor. Vicky had recently left the AONB Team in order to take up a new role as Lead Ranger in Ascension Island.

11. Future Meeting Dates

Date		Time	Venue
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

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