

**Report to:** Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018

**Lead Member/Officer:** Lead Member for Housing, Regulation and the Environment/  
Area of Outstanding National Beauty Officer

**Report Author:** Area of Outstanding National Beauty Officer

**Title:** Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural  
Beauty (AONB) Management Plan and LA Plans and update  
on current collective work by the AONBs of Wales Update

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**1. What is the report about?**

Firstly the report brings the Scrutiny Committee members up to date with the relationship between the AONB Management Plan and plans produced by Denbighshire County Council. Secondly the report will bring members up to date with current discussions taking place between the 5 Welsh AONB Officers, the National Association of AONBs and Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government, together with information on the English Review on National Parks and AONBs.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

Scrutiny requested to examine the AONB's long-term management plan and how it supports and complements the Council's own plans.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

That the Committee:

3.1 considers the Plan and provides observations in relation to its contents; and

3.2 having undertaken the above is assured that its aims and objectives support and complement the Council's vision and aspirations for the area

**4. Report details**

4.1 The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Natural Beauty is one of 5 AONBs in Wales. Collectively with the 3 National Parks they are known as the Designated Landscapes of Wales. They cover 25% of the land surface of Wales. These 8 landscapes are given a National Designation to protect them. The 5 AONBs have a single statutory purpose of 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' although the current work of the AONB is far more reaching than this single purpose.

4.2 The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB covers 390 square kilometres (Map Appendix 1) of the counties of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. It stretches from Prestatyn in the north to Chirk in the south and includes the Denbighshire towns of Corwen and Llangollen.

## The AONB Plan and Local Authority Plans

- 4.3 In 2000 the AONBs had extra weight added to its Management Plan by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act when it became a statutory duty on Local Authorities with an AONB to produce a plan under section 89 . Within this legislation a new duty, section 85 was placed on public bodies' to have regard for the purposes of AONB designation.'
- 4.4 The current AONB Plan was produced and published in 2014. The main local authority plan that impacts the AONB is the local development plan, produced by each of the 3 local planning authorities, these plans can have a significant effect on the landscape of the AONB, as is also true of the AONB designation, on those plans. This has led to five significant areas that officers of the three authorities and AONB work together on:-
- The Local Development plans, which recognise the National Importance of the AONB within the plan.
  - That the AONB is consulted on significant Planning Applications by the Local Authorities
  - That the AONB has a Landscape Working Group to consider significant planning applications and consultations (Currently chaired by Councillor Martyn Holland from DCC)
  - That the 3 local authorities together with the AONB Planning Officer have produced supplementary planning guidance (SPG) on the AONB for the three authorities, primarily to help applicants of planning applications.
  - That from time to time the AONB team also provides training to the LA members and officers on the AONB
- 4.5 The AONB Team has welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the local authorities at every opportunity and is currently working closely on tourism, economy and land management. In particular the team is engaged with the 3 Local Action Groups of Cadwyn Clwyd and the 3 Public Service Boards.
- 4.6 The AONB Officer is working with the DCC Corporate Team in Llangollen to bring together various strands of work.
- 4.7 The Denbighshire Corporate Plan 2017-22 was produced after the AONB Management Plan so is not considered within it. But although not mentioned, the Corporate Plan share many of the AONB values equality and diversity and promotion the welsh language. In particular:-
- **Corporate Plan Priority Working Together-** the AONB have 5 DCC Councillors, 2 on the Joint Committee and 3 on the AONB Partnership as well as many others representing all sectors of society as well as the public, private and voluntary sectors. The AONB Partnership has 5 themed working groups:-
    - Landscape
    - Land Management
    - The Historical Environment
    - Recreation, Health and Wellbeing
    - The Sustainable development Fund

- **Corporate Plan Priority Housing-** It is recognised within the AONB Plan that it should ‘Promote affordable housing schemes for local people in appropriate places’ which is covered by a specific policy. The team is also currently working with the housing section to promote health and wellbeing to the council’s tenants through a project called ‘nature for health.’ In the past the team has worked with housing groups on enhancing their estates bringing landscape improvements such as tree planting and new drystone walls.
- **Corporate Plan Priority Environment-** The AONB Team manages significant sites and tracts of Denbighshire on behalf of DCC, including Loggerheads Country Park, Plas Newydd Historic House and Moel Famau. The main thrust of the work undertaken by the AONB Rangers on these and the 26 other council owned sites, is land management for biodiversity and promoting understanding and enjoyment for both residents and visitors. The AONB of course works across the whole AONB as well as working on private land to enhance the special features of the AONB, the team works with graziers and land owners on all aspects of land management, visitor management and conservation.

There are major investment schemes across Denbighshire including ‘Our Picturesque Landscape’ National Grid Landscape ‘Enhancement Initiative Scheme’ and Scottish Power Energy Network’s undergrounding programme, together with the Grazing Animals Sustainable Management Scheme. A total investment of over £2,000,000 from outside sources.

The whole of this nationally valued landscape can be enjoyed from the wonderful Offa’s Dyke National Trail (177 miles from Prestatyn to Chepstow)with runs the full length of the AONB and is also managed by our team in the AONB.
- **Corporate Plan Priority Young People** – Within the AONB opportunities for work placements, to become a Young Ranger and join in on our voluntary and health projects. The service also has opportunities to create career paths for young people to step out of education or voluntary work into Assistant Ranger posts within the service.
- **Corporate Plan Priority Connected and Resilient Communities** – The AONB Team works with communities on community shops, food trails, community gardens and other projects often through the funding of AONBs Sustainable Development Fund.

The team has a Sustainable Tourism Strategy that has made us relevant to a number of individuals and groups. The team help set up both the ‘Clwydian Range Food Trail and the Good Grub Club, together with supporting the Clwydian Range Tourism Group over a number of years.

The community has also benefited from a number of opportunities in health and well-being from healthy walks to Nordic walking.

The team has also worked with a number of town and community councils to deliver a range of projects including the Community Miles Leaflets.

### **Update on current collective work by the AONBs of Wales Update**

- 4.8 In May the Minister for the Environment wrote to the AONB Officers of Wales together with the Chief Executives of the National Association of AONBs and Natural Resources Wales seeking our collective views on greater parity with the National Parks

(Appendix 2) after several meetings we came to a collective response (Appendix 3) which was sent to the Minister. A further meeting was then convened by the Minister from which we have been asked to revisit the advice given and its likely costs.

**5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

See list above at 4.7

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

N/A

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

N/A

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

N/A

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

There are no direct financial implications of the recommendations within this report

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

The major risks are two fold firstly further cuts to resources due to the withdrawal from Europe and the grants that have been achieved through the Rural Development Plan and secondly disruption to confidence in the economy through Brexit therefore a potential disruption to the farming economy with whom we have a very close relationship to promote local produce.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

The Legal basis to lies in Section 101(5) of the Local Government Act of 1972 and the Local Government Act 2000, where Local authorities can enter arrangements to 'Discharge functions jointly with one or more other local authorities by means of a Joint Committee'

Scrutiny's powers in relation to this matter are outlined in Section 7.2.3 and 7.4.2(e) of the Council's Constitution.

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