



Bryniau Clwyd a
Dyffryn Dyfrdwy
Clwydian Range
and Dee Valley

Ardal o Harddwch Natïrwl Eiddoriedad
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
Partnership
Minutes of the Meeting held on
Friday 22nd March 2019
at
The Nant Hall Hotel, Prestatyn
at 10:00 am

AONB Partnership Members

Councillor Huw L Jones DCC
Councillor Christine Marston DCC
Councillor Hugh Jones WCBC
Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones WCBC
Councillor Paul D Jones WCBC

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

Representing the Natural Environment

Les Starling

Representing Land Management

Sandy Archdale, Huw Morgan

Representing the Built Environment

Phil Durrell

In Attendance

Clwydian Range & Dee Valley Joint Committee

Councillor Tony Thomas Chair of Joint Committee
Councillor David Kelly Joint Committee WCBC

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
Rachel Jones AONB Partnership Officer

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Huw Rees Head of Countryside & Heritage Services

Flintshire County Council

Helen Mrowiec Flintshire Countryside Service

Wrexham County Borough Council

Anna Irwin, Allan Forrest

Natural Resources Wales

Paul Mitchell, Richard Deering

National Association of AONB's (NAAONB)

Howard Davies

Apologies for absence were submitted from: -

Tirweddau
i fyw
.org.uk

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DYFFRYN DYFRDWY
Un o'r
Teulu AHNE

CLWYDIAN RANGE
AND DEE VALLEY
One of the
AONB Family

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Andrew Worthington OBE Chair, Councillor Paul Cunningham(Vice Chair), Councillor Colin Legg, Councillor Martyn Holland, Councillor Owen Thomas, John Roberts, Del Roberts-Jones, Rajan Madhok, Martin Howarth.

Welcome

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, Councillor Hugh Jones agreed to Chair the meeting. He extended a warm welcome to new Partnership members Huw Morgan and Rajan Madhok,

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 12th October 2018

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

Matters arising

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NAAONB Outstanding Week 2018

The AONB Officer said that the full length of the World Heritage Site (WHS) was walked in stages as part of the week and that there had been good attendance on all of the walks. Outstanding Week would be repeated this year and it was featured in Out & About.

2. Update from Working Groups

An update from the Chair of the Working Groups.

2.1 Heritage, Culture & Communities Working Group

Chair of the group, Christine Evans explained that Ian Grant of Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) and the AONB Rangers had been completing scrub clearance at the 6m high Motte, Tomen y Faerdre, Llanarmon yn Ial and more work would be carried out during October.

Offa's Dyke Excavation at Chirk Castle 2018

CPAT Senior Archaeologist, Ian Grant, had led on an excavation in the grounds of Chirk Castle.

Dating of the Offa's Dyke

Carbon dating was completed, and two points of interest arose from the results, firstly, the dates demonstrated that the bank was built after AD 430 and therefore clearly post Roman. The second was that the date AD 887-1019 was over 100 years after the reign of Offa. Further research and analysis was ongoing.

Restoration of Cilcain Decoy Station

The group had been investigating the possibility of restoration of the Bunker which was used as a decoy for German bombers in WW2. Ian Grant along with members of the Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley would undertake a site visit with the aim of protecting the site and providing interpretation.

Coed Bell Oak Woodland, Prestatyn

The group had allocated its budget of £1k towards scrub clearance.

2.2 Land Management & the Natural Environment Working Group

Moorland Fire on Llanysilio Mountain

Chair of the group, Les Starling, introduced Senior Countryside Warden, Rhun Jones, who provided an update of the aftermath of the moorland fire. DCC Scrutiny Committee had convened an 'evidence gathering / lessons learnt' meeting and the Countryside Service's contribution had been recognised and appreciated. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) had also been investigating the fire and had noted that a reduction of grazing might be partly to blame for the fire. The source of the fire had not been identified but it had been suggested that it could have arisen from a controlled burn. The meeting also considered future management of the mountain.

Discussion ensued. A Member enquired if there had been enough Fire Service staff present. Rhun responded that there had been enough staff. Consideration had been given as to whether the army should have been drafted in to assist. However, this did not happen and the fire was never declared a major incident, because property was not at risk.

Appropriate Management of Controlled Burning

Concerns were raised regarding future controlled burning and it was explained that land management was driven by agricultural needs. Responsible burning would be promoted and the fire service would be involved in this process.

One member proposed that local press be invited to look at the devastation that the fire had caused and for the policy regarding fire breaks to be explained.

Flailbot

The Rangers were currently using a Flailbot which was very effective with the removal of old gorse on mountain slopes. Cutting had been taking place on Moel Famau and Moel Fenlli.

Discussion ensued and it was queried why the machine was being used during the middle of the lambing season. It was explained that snow had caused a delay in the programme and hopefully this would not happen in future years.

SMS Grazing Bid

The bid had been successful. 41 sites would be utilised for sustainable grazing. Two project officers were to be appointed and the jobs were currently advertised.

2.3

Landscape Character & Built Environment Working Group

Cllr Martyn Holland had submitted apologies for today's meeting and the AONB Planning Officer delivered an update on the work of the group. He explained that in addition to the routine work of dealing with planning and development related consultations, the group were focussed on delivery of three main areas of work arising from the AONB Management Plan, the Dark Sky Initiative; Reducing Visual Intrusion and Monitoring Landscape Change.

Dark Sky Initiative

A Presentation had been made to the group on the familiarisation visit to the North Pennines AONB. It had been a very informative trip, which included a site visit to their outdoor observatory. A North Wales Protected Landscapes Dark Sky Officer had now been appointed, Dani Robertson, who had also made a presentation to the group. Dani would be assisting the AONB with the application for formal recognition of dark sky status. She was also leading on a series of educational events planned throughout the year which would feature in the latest Out and About programme of events. Some of the events would be in partnership with Techniquet, Wrexham.

It was confirmed that the AONB would require a Lighting Plan as part of the submission for formal dark sky recognition, and a piece of work would shortly be commissioned across the three Local Authorities. It was noted that some upgrading of street lighting had already been completed, which had reduced light pollution, but there had been comments that this has resulted in less effective CCTV monitoring in some areas. However, there was evidence that crime was not increased as a result of reduced lighting.

Reducing Visual Intrusion - Overhead Electricity Lines

The group has been involved for some time with a long-term partnership project in conjunction with Scottish Power to underground the most prominent overhead electricity lines in the AONB. This work was ongoing and the next project to be commenced was at the Horseshoe Pass.

Monitoring Landscape Change - Ash Die Back

As 70 percent of Wales is now affected by Ash Die Back, including most of the AONB, the group had recognised that this had significant potential to change landscape character. The Tree Council had recently developed an Ash Dieback Tool Kit particularly aimed at land managers, which it is hoped would be considered further at a future meeting of the group. It was understood that Welsh Government were also convening a working group to focus on the issue. Community Partnership

Officer, Rachel Jones presented a recently commissioned film and drone survey showing the extent of Ash Die Back in the Alyn Valley, notably Loggerheads Country Park, which also recorded and celebrated what we could lose. The film was shown to the meeting and would be launched to the public soon. The AONB would also be inviting the general public to share their images of Ash trees.

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

The Chair of the Group John Roberts had submitted his apologies, therefore Roger Cragg gave the update on behalf of the group.

Nature for Health Project

The Project was a joint venture by Denbighshire Housing Team and Denbighshire Countryside Service, and promoted well-being benefits associated with being outside in the natural environment. The scheme would use environmental social prescribing in four areas: Rhyl, Prestatyn, Llangollen, and Corwen, for twice a week activities such as allotments, volunteering and walks. DCC Housing Officer, Emily Reddy, was leading on the project and had good links with the residents. There had been a good response to the project and it was felt that working with members of the Countryside Service had encouraged more people to attend. It was a good and collaborative project.

Footpaths

There had been excellent support from all three Local Authorities and it was pleasing to see all three Local Authorities Rights of Way Teams attending the meeting. Flintshire Team had recently been reorganised. It was recognised that all Teams were providing a good service in what were very challenging financial circumstances.

Data on footpaths

In general the data up to date, assistance was offered to DCC however, there were some complications with loaning out of recording tablets. data was available on the GIS system. This item was ongoing.

Fixed point photography

A meeting had been convened with Offa's Dyke Path Officer, Rob Dingle, to discuss possible fixed point photography at locations on the Offa's Dyke Path.

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

Chair of the Group, Dewi Davies, provided an update on behalf of the group.

Visitor Appraisal Study

The AONB Team had received an initial draft of the report. Additional information has been provided to the appointed consultants, and a second draft would be circulated to the group shortly.

Action

The Study would be brought to the Partnership when complete

Stay, Eat Do – Clwydian Range Tourism Group

The Current themes were: arts and crafts and countryside skills. The project had received a lot of media attention.

North East Wales Volunteer Group

Four volunteer business groups had met to discuss administration and other pressures. The group were exploring the possibility of sharing resources -people, expertise, and time across different groups. Funding would be required to appoint a business professional to explore appropriate governance improvements.

The Corwen Giant

This was a joint project with Visit Wales, the giant 'Drewyn' would be woken up by the community on Saturday 23rd March during the launch event. The project would provide a good profile for Corwen and the railway. The Sustainable Development Officer, Ceri Lloyd, had led on this project on behalf of the AONB. Members were invited to attend the launch.

10 year anniversary of the World Heritage Site

There was a proposed package of activities in collaboration between the AONB, Local Authorities, Canal and River Trust, and community groups, leading to a bid to Visit Wales Tourism TPIF.

Denbighshire County Council Tourism Strategy

The copy of the new draft strategy was currently out for consultation.

2.6 **Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Working Group**

Chair of the group, Mike Skuse, reported that out of a total of £50,000 for the 2019/2020 year, the group had awarded just over £25,000 at a recent meeting. Other applications were on now on the horizon and projects would be submitted at the next meeting. Amongst those approved were:

❖ NWWT's Graigfechan Eco-Connectivity Project	£14,000 over two years
❖ Training in Basic Rural Skills within the AONB in Flintshire – partnership project between the AONB and FCC	£2,350
❖ Waking up the Corwen Giant	£1,500

The Sustainable Development Officer, Ceri Lloyd, reported that Welsh Government had just confirmed that Additional 147k would be provided for Wales' AONB's from an SDF underspend for this year.

The Chair commented that it never ceased to amaze him the amount of work that volunteers completed and thanked everyone for contributing to making the AONB the very special place that it is.

3. **Section 85 Progress**

Pontcysyllte Waste Water Treatment Works

The AONB Officer reported that he had held a private meeting with Dwr Cymru Managing Director for Waste Water, Steve Wilson, Steve was currently in negotiations with NRW regarding how to get the sewage works into the relevant framework.

Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)

A number of local farmers were applying for LEI in Tremeirchion area.

Undergrounding of Lines - Scottish Power

Work was being completed on the Horseshoe Pass, and a range of schemes were now being investigated including Llangar Church, Fron Bache, Plas Newydd pumping station.

4. **Area Statement Process**

North East Wales, Senior Natural Resources Planning Officer, Richard Dearing Provided a PowerPoint presentation on Wales Area Statement Process.

In summary, the aim was "The sustainable management of our natural resources in a way and at a rate that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations and which contribute to the seven well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

(See attached presentation). Discussion ensued.

Concerns were raised regarding the current difficulties with livestock and what was proposed for the farming community. Richard responded that no decisions had been made as yet, and that NRW would work very closely with the farming community and any proposals/ opportunities would be shared.

Members also raised concerns about noise and light pollution and the importance of engagement with the local communities during the process.

Mike Skuse thought that the Future Generations Act might be seen to dilute the safeguards given to protected landscapes, and wondered whether it might perhaps be interpreted in a way that would permit some windfarm development within the AONB.

6. The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB)

Chief Executive of the NAAONB, Howard Davies provided a clear and concise power point presentation explaining the purpose of the Association and that there were 46 AONB's in England and Wales covering 8000 square miles, 700 elected members, with AONB partnerships turnover around £20 million per annum. (see attached presentation).

Concerns were raised that a large number of people did not seem to recognise the importance of AONB's compared to National Parks. This was acknowledged. Most people did know about locations like Moel Famau and the Cotswolds but failed to recognise that these areas were within an AONB. It was agreed that the approach to landscapes as a whole must be one of integration.

The AONB Officer was the lead officer representing the NAAONB on the National Grid Committee.

7. Update from the AONB Officer

70th Anniversary of Access to Countryside Act

The Act provides powers for protecting the natural beauty of some of the finest and most loved landscapes. The AONB Officer said that this year marked the 70th anniversary of the Act. In order to celebrate the anniversary the NAAONB were working with Arts Councils to arrange an artist in residence, and nature improvement throughout AONB's

Joint Committee

The AONB Officer and the Chair of the Joint Committee had undertaken a site visit to the Llŷn Peninsula and had **proposed to meet** with some other AONB Chair's that were based in Wales.

Legal Agreement

The agreement was now due to be renewed. It had worked well for the past five years, and only minimal changes would be required.

Generic letter to Local Authorities and Members

The Chair of the Joint Committee had sent a generic letter to all three Local Authorities and Members to remind them of the importance of the AONB area. He had provided an example of a recently erected signpost on the Horseshoe Pass and yellow signs that the AONB had not been consulted on.

Our Picturesque Landscape Project (OPL)

Some small projects had commenced including the Clinker Path at Trevor which had been completed and the steps at Plas Newydd were currently underway.

8. Any Other Business

Curlew Cymru Project

Senior Countryside Warden, Rhun Jones, explained that neither of the Curlew Project bids had been successful. He emphasised that members of Curlew Cymru were willing to attend community groups to give presentations as the profile of the project needed to be raised. A Meeting would be held next week to consider the future options

9. Future Meeting Dates

Date		Time	Venue
Friday 14th June	2019	at 10 am	Corwen Sports Pavilion AONB Awards to be presented
Friday 18th October	2019	at 10 am	To be decided

AONB Annual Forum November 7 th (Evening)	2019	Evening	
Friday 14 th February	2020	10 am	To be decided
Friday 5 th June	2020	10 am	To be decided
Friday 9 th October	2020	10 am	To be decided

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