



**Bryniau Clwyd a
Dyffryn Dyfrdwy**
Clwydian Range
and Dee Valley

Ardal o Harddwch Natïrwl Eiddafael
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 14th February 2020

at

Gwernymynydd Village Centre

at 10:00 am

AONB Partnership Members

Councillor Tony Thomas	DCC
Chair of Joint Committee	
Councillor Christine Marston	DCC
Councillor Martyn Holland	DCC
Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones	WCBC
Councillor Paul D Jones	WCBC
Councillor Paul Cunningham	FCC
Councillor Colin Legg	FCC

In Attendance

Howard Sutcliffe	AONB Officer
David Shiel	AONB Area Manager
Karen Weaver	AONB Communications Officer
Rachel Jones	AONB Community Partnership Officer
Tony Hughes	AONB Planning Officer
Ellie Wainwright	Assistant Countryside Ranger
Paul Evans	Plas Newydd Site Manager

Representing Access & Recreation

Andy Worthington OBE – Chair,
John Roberts

Representing Our Picturesque Landscape Project

Kate Thomson Partnership Officer

Representing Rural Interest

Christine Evans, Roger Cragg

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Huw Rees Countryside &
Heritage Services Manager

Representing Business Interest

Dewi Davies

Flintshire County Council

Tom Woodall Flintshire Countryside Service
& ROW Manager

Representing Historical Interest

Tony King

Wrexham County Borough Council

Anna Irwin, Allan Forrest

Representing the Natural Environment

Les Starling

Meeting Observers

Joan Cunningham

Representing Land Management

Sandy Archdale, Huw Morgan,
Rhian Peirce

Representing Landscape Interest

Mike Skuse

Representing Individual Interest

David Davies

Representing the Built Environment

Philip Durrell

Representing Urban Interest

Rajan Madhok, Ian Papworth



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**sir ddinbych
denbighshire**
County Council

**CYNGOR
Sir y Fflint
Flintshire**
COUNTY COUNCIL

wrexham
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEIS TREF SIROL
wreccsam

Apologies for absence were submitted from: -

Councillor Derek Butler, Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Councillor David Kelly, Councillor Huw Jones, Del Roberts Jones

Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed new member Rhian Peirce, Rhian would represent the farming community and land management on the Partnership.

1. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 18th October 2019**
Matters Arising

Page 3, item 4

Management plan

Consultants had now been appointed to prepare a draft of the plan.

DCC Tree Officer

Andrew Cutts had been appointed as the County Tree Officer.

Accuracy

Subject to the foregoing it was resolved that the minutes be approved and confirmed as a correct record of the meeting.

2. **Our Picturesque Landscape Project (OPL) Update & Minutes**

OPL Partnership Officer, Kate Thomson gave a presentation on the progress of a number of ongoing initiatives including the Horseshoe Falls, Picturesque bus service, camera obscura at Dinas Bran, Corwen museum and restoration of the Dell at Plas Newydd.

Discussion ensued. A member enquired whether the Camera Obscura on Dinas Bran event would be featured in Out & About and the local press, Kate explained that individual promotion would be held as the event was part of the Llangollen Fringe Festival. Discussion was also held on the increasing number of people canoeing near to the Horseshoe Falls, and the AONB Area Manager, David Shiel explained that access to the river had increased and improvements had been made to the car park at Llantysilio. The landscape design was currently being considered and Welsh Government had provided some funding to take the proposal forward. Access to Water legislation was currently being drafted by Welsh Government, and the Dee might be used as a pilot project.

Cllr Sonia Benbow-Jones enquired if specific first aid equipment/medication was available for visitors with asthma. The AONB Area Manager responded that DCC or the Countryside Service did not provide asthma equipment/ medication within their first aid packs but the comment would be noted.

3. **AONB Award**

The AONB Officer explained that the AONB benefited over the years from all those that had given their time and effort to help improve the landscape and communities of the AONB. It was important that recognition and appreciation was given from the AONB to those special people and communities.

He went on to explain the two categories of the award:

1. The AONB Award
2. The AONB Volunteer Award

Nominations were invited from businesses or individuals that: operate or work within the AONB, provide a good quality service, business or work that is sustainable or enhances the AONB.

Action

For all members to consider potential nominations and bring to the Communications Officer's attention.

4. **Update from the AONB Officer**

Plas Newydd

The AONB Officer, introduced the newly appointed site manager for Plas Newydd, Paul Evans, Paul said that he was looking forward to the new season which would commence in April.

AONB Forum

The Forum was held on 11th November and the theme for the evening was 'Landscape Character & Built Environment'. There was good attendance.

Landscapes for Life Week

The AONB Officer had led number of walks to celebrate the week. There had been good attendance on the walks. The week also celebrated the 70th anniversary of the 1949 Access to Countryside Act.

World Heritage Site Stake Holder Meetings – The Chief Executive Officer for Wrexham County Borough Council, Ian Bancroft was the new Chairman of the WHS Board.

DCC Corporate Support Services Review

Denbighshire County Council was currently holding a review of all of its services, and the Communication Officer, Karen Weaver's role had been included within the review. The AONB Officer emphasised to members the importance of Karen's role, explaining that the post was funded by the three Local Authorities within the AONB to carry out work solely for the AONB. This was ongoing.

Natural Resources Wales Area Statements

Area Statements were being completed in Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham.

Designated Landscapes – Additional Capital Funding

Deputy Minister Hannah Blythyn had announced that the protected landscapes of Wales were to receive an extra £4m funding from Welsh Government to enable key improvements including decarbonisation and green measures, improved tourism infrastructure and enhanced biodiversity.

An executive officer and an administrator (funded by Welsh Government) would be appointed for two years to convene a protected landscape forum. The AONB had expressed an interest in hosting the Officers, if successful the AONB would be at the forefront of a national project. Concerns were raised regarding the potential negative impact on the workload of the AONB. However, the strongly prevailing view was that hosting the project would be of benefit and help confirm the prestige and standing of the AONB nationally.

Action

A vote was held and it was unanimously agreed that the AONB Partnership supported an application to host project.

Response Climate Change Emergency

Howard enquired whether the AONB should have an emergency climate change response. It was agreed that an additional strategy was not required and the AONB's response would be embedded in the Management Plan.

Action

The response to be embodied into the Management Plan with a clear statement.

5. **Update for Working Groups**

Heritage, Culture & Communities Working Group

Chair of the Group Christine Evans provided an update on behalf of the group.

Land for Sale at Dinas Bran

Denbighshire County Council, NRW and Llangollen Town Council hoped to jointly purchase the SSSI land which was located on the main route up to Dinas Bran. This was ongoing.

Camera Obscura at Dinas Bran

OPL Team was currently in discussions with a private company to hire a camera obscura This would be placed at Dinas Bran for a number of days and the event tied in with the Llangollen Fringe. Donkeys were being considered to take people up to the castle. The event would be held in July. Re-enactors were also being considered.

Chirk Castle

AONB SDF Funding had been approved for Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) to complete another excavation of the site in June. A bid had also been submitted to Cadw

Landscape Character & Built Environment Working Group

The Chair of the group, Cllr Martyn Holland, provided an update on behalf of the group. There had been no further meetings since the last Partnership meeting. However, the AONB Annual Forum had taken place, which had focussed on the work of the Landscape Character and Built Environment Group.

He reported that the Forum had been held in the newly restored Old Ruthin Courthouse in November and, despite torrential rain, there was a good turnout with a number of interesting and informative presentations around the theme of 'Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Quality and Character':

- Richard Sumner from NRW completed a presentation on how new development should be designed to respect the AONB's character and qualities.
- Two presentations on mitigating visual intrusion followed – Ben Smith from National Grid presented on their Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) and Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI), and Alan Jones from Scottish Power presented on how the character and appearance of the AONB's landscape has been enhanced by undergrounding overhead electricity lines.

Unfortunately, the planned presentation on the Dark Sky Initiative had to be cancelled, but at very short notice Kate Thomson had stepped in to give an update on the excellent 'Our Picturesque Landscape' project.

Cllr Holland confirmed that the next meeting of the Working Group would be held on 28th February and that the main theme would be minerals and waste planning in the AONB.

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

Chair of the Group Roger Cragg provided an update on behalf of the group. Roger explained that Paul Mitchell was covering Ceri Lloyd's maternity leave as SDF Officer. The 2019/20 Sustainable Development Fund Programme had been agreed at meetings of the Working Group. Overall, 17 projects had been funded via SDF over the last twelve months.

An interim claim for grant was submitted to Welsh Government in December together with a project progress report.

A further meeting was held in February and approval was given for two new projects scheduled for delivery by the end of the financial year. The first was a project to promote local food and produce that would filter into festivals and events. The second was for a conservation report on an historic wall and gate at Trevor, site of the JC Edwards's brick and tile manufacturers.

Sudd Afel Project

The aim of the project was to reduce the waste of unused excess apples in and around the Vale of Clwyd by making and selling apple juice in cooperation with the local community. Any excess profit would be put back into the community.

Paul provided bottles of the juice for Partnership members to try.

All agreed that the project was a good initiative.

5.2 **Landscape Management & the Natural Environment Working Group**

Chair of the Group Les Starling provided an update on behalf of the group.

Moorland Officer

In response to the major fire at Llantyisilo during 2018 one of the key recommendations was for the feasibility of a Moorland Officer to be examined. Following a recent DCC Scrutiny meeting negotiations had been held with NRW and funding had been agreed to proceed with the post.

North East Wales Grazing Project

The Chair of the group explained that there would be challenging work ahead along with some substantial changes in the ways that some of the sites would be managed.

The Chair thanked everyone for all the work that had been completed to date.

5.3 **Recreation, Enjoyment & Wellbeing Working Group**

Chair of the Group John Roberts provided an update on behalf of the group, explaining that Public Health Wales were now engaging with the group, and it was hoped that this relationship would be further strengthened.

Visitor Appraisal Study

Welsh Government had increased the annual amount of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) funding for sustainable tourism and it was hoped that some of this could contribute to the appraisal study. There was still some irresponsible access issues regarding visitors parking inconsiderately by not

using the car parks, this was particularly noted over the Christmas period at Bwlch Pen Barras, Moel Famau.

Access Reform Group

The AONB Area manager has a seat on one of the National Access Reform Groups, and will update future Partnership meetings.

- Opening up access to walkers and bridle ways.

The Chair of the group said that there were still a number of ROWs that were inaccessible within the AONB, and he hoped that these would receive appropriate attention.

Another major worry was the increasing visitor pressure on the landscape near key sites. Welsh Government was also considering proposals to extend access to rights of way to cyclists and other users. A statement was expected in early summer and the implications would need to be carefully considered,

Discussion ensued. The AONB Area Manager said that meetings were being held with DCC regarding parking at Moel Famau,

6. **Presentation – Nature for Health Project**

Assistant Countryside Ranger, Ellie Wainwright gave a clear and concise presentation on the project explaining some of the achievements of the 18 month pilot. The project had engaged with the Health Service which had contributed some funding in order for the project to continue. This was welcomed though the difficulty of unlocking funding was recognised.

The Chair thanked Ellie for a most interesting presentation.

Action

A copy of the presentation and film to be sent out to members.

7. **Section 85**

The AONB Officer reported on the latest position with the National Grid Visual Improvement Programme (VIP) and associated Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI). In addition, he briefly reported the latest progress on the Scottish Power Overhead Line Undergrounding Programme, making reference to a new project at Plas Newydd. He was also pleased to report that contact had been made with OFFWAT at a very senior level to raise the matter of future action to mitigate the harmful impact of Pontcysyllte Sewage Works on the WHS.

He would follow up this contact in the coming months.

8. **Any Other business**

The AONB Officer reported that the Annual AONB Champions meeting was to be held on March 12th. This involved county councillors and community councillors with an interest in the AONB and was one of the means by which the profile and awareness of the AONB was maintained amongst local elected members.

7 **Future Meeting Dates**

AONB Champions Forum - March 12th 2020 Loggerheads Meeting Room 2pm - 6

AONB Annual Forum - November 19th 2020 early evening venue to be decided

Date		Time	Venue
Friday 5 th June (cancelled)	2020	10 am	To be decided
Friday 9 th October	2020	10 am	To be decided
Friday 19 th February	2021	10 am	To be decided
Friday 28 th May	2021	10 am	To be decided
Friday 15 th October	2021	10 am	To be decided