



**Meeting of the AONB Partnership
Friday 15th October 2021
at 10:00
at The Community Hwb Llysfasi
& Online Meeting**

In Attendance

AONB Partnership Members

Councillor Tony Thomas DCC
Chair of Joint Committee
Councillor Bobby Feeley DCC
Joint Committee Member
Councillor Christine Marston DCC
Councillor Martyn Holland DCC
(joined online)
Councillor Graham Timms DCC
(joined online)
Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones WCBC

Chair of the Partnership

Andrew Worthington OBE
Chair of the Partnership

Representing Rural Interest

Christine Evans, Roger Cragg

Representing Landscape Interest

Michael Skuse

Representing Historical Interest

Tony King
(joined online)

Representing Urban Interest

Rajan Madhok, Helen Job
(joined online)

Representing the Natural Environment

Les Starling

Representing Land Management

Huw Morgan

Representing Recreation and ROW

John Roberts

Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

Howard Sutcliffe AONB Officer
David Shiel AONB Area Manager
Karen Weaver AONB Coordinator
Ceri Lloyd AONB SDF Officer
(joined online)

Representing Denbighshire Countryside Service

Huw Rees Countryside and Heritage
(joined online) Services Manager

Representing Flintshire County Council

Tom Woodall Access and Natural
(joined online) Environment Manager

Representing Natural Resources Wales

Alun Price Partnerships Officer
(joined online) North East

for
were
from:
Sandy

Berry,



Apologies
absence
submitted

Archdale,
Graham
Councillor

Paul Cunningham, David Davies, Paul Evans, Tony Hughes, Councillor Hugh Jones, Del Roberts-Jones, Rachel Jones, Rhun Jones, Ian Papworth, Kate Thomson

1. Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the Partnership. He explained that for the first time a hybrid meeting was being trialled. It was probable that there may be some technical issues at this initial meeting. However, it would be a learning curve for all. The Chair welcomed Joint Committee members, Councillors Tony Thomas and Bobby Feeley to the meeting.

1b New Partnership Members

The Chair welcomed newly appointed member's Councillor Graham Timms, (who would represent Denbighshire County Council), and Helen Job to their first Partnership meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on May 21st 2021

The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.
The Chair explained that 'Matters Arising' would be covered within the meeting.

2b. Minutes of Our Picturesque Landscape Steering Group Meeting

A copy of the OPL Quarterly Report had also been circulated to the group.
All agreed that the project was producing some excellent work.

3. AONB Management Plan

AONB Area Manager, David Shiel gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the main aspects of the strategy, explaining that the plan was a statutory duty on the Local Authorities that was reviewed every five years. The plan was split into three sections: State of the AONB Report, AONB Management Strategy, AONB Action Plan. Consultations had been held 2020 with wider stakeholders, online and email consultations had been held and good feedback had been received. Species decline, climate change, changes to farming and recreation pressure were identified as some of the main impacts on the AONB. Twelve out of twenty three SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) areas were identified by NRW as being in an unfavorable condition.

The plan would be presented at the next Joint Committee meeting to seek approval for it to be submitted for public consultation.

Discussion ensued. Concerns were raised regarding some of the SSSI's being of substandard condition.

However, it was agreed that there was a national decline. Phosphates and Ash Die Back were raised, David explained that the Alyn Valley was predominantly affected by Ash Die Back, and that the valley it would change as a result. Public safety and habitat were a concern. Climate change and managing mature woodland was critical and support was required for landowners and farmers.

Planning issues including the selling off of woodland was also a concern. It was noted that an Environmental Impact Statement should be obtained before any work was carried out within a woodland.

3a Housing

Discussion was held regarding the increasing demand for rural properties along with rising house prices across the UK following COVID, and a member responded that there were some significant divides within the county of Denbighshire regarding these rises.

Social Housing

The AONB Officer, Howard Sutcliffe, said that he had met with both Denbighshire and Flintshire Housing Officers who informed him that the demand for social housing was mainly in areas with amenities and not rural areas. He reiterated that new build social housing would be welcome as far as the AONB Team was concerned, in the villages and towns within the AONB, although there had to be a proven demand for it.

Discussion ensued. The timescale of the band list was raised as an issue along with some resistance to social housing in some rural areas.

3b National Park Status

The meeting considered how the Plan would meet the requirements of potential National Park Status. It was explained that this was not mentioned within the plan and that the statutory duty was to specify what was special within the AONB. However, a National Park Plan would be very similar to an AONB Plan, one main difference being that National Parks had significantly more resources available than AONB's.

Denbighshire County Council to date, had not committed itself to a formal decision regarding the National Park proposal from Welsh Government.

3c National Observatory for Wales

The potential of a National Observatory for Wales was raised, and it was explained that if there were to be one within Wales then it would be very well placed within the AONB given the quality of its dark skies. The AONB Officer noted that Denbighshire County Council had a cold war rotor station within its holdings, which was located on Prestatyn Hillside and could make a very interesting location.

3d Funding

Discussion was held regarding the funding of Climate Change and it was explained that core funding had been a fundamental problem this year, AONBs were considering ways in which they could improve the security of core funding in future years. Welsh Government was also working with the AONBs to a secure more collaborative approach.

It was noted that The National Parks were better equipped to deliver larger scale schemes as they were significantly better funded and each had 120 plus staff.

3e Access to the Countryside

A member raised concerns regarding the poor condition of some of the Rights of Way in the AONB networks, and suggested that improvements should be prioritized, particularly in helping to relieve pressure on honey pot sites.

It was agreed that a lot of visitors do like to visit the better known sites. However, a wider network was being considered to support a wider footfall and this was currently being trialled.

Access to green spaces that the AONB provided during the pandemic and having that green space on your doorstep was vitally important.

A member noted that Loggerheads Country Park received a large number of visitors from the Liverpool area. However, the majority of visitors to Rhyl had not heard of Loggerheads or the AONB. It was explained that the AONB had previously funded buses to bring schools and communities from urban areas into the AONB. How to further promote the AONB was an ongoing issue. Members felt that the branding of a National Park would alleviate a lot of these problems as the area would have a greater status and impact with visitors. It was also noted that AONB's do not have the recreational duty that National Parks do.

3f Species Recovery and Management of the Land

A member said that in his view climate change would not be resolved by solely reducing CO2 emissions and that more emphasis should be put on to people adapting their lives. The AONB Area Manager said that the climate was changing and this would have an impact. Our response to climate change, species recovery and management of the land should not impact biodiversity. Changes in farming practices and how we manage our land had impacted on species. It was important that those two items were considered together.

All agreed that the AONB Area Manager had written an excellent Plan, which included important information that had not previously been available. The plan was a quality and cutting edge document and the Chair thanked David for all of his work and professionalism.

4. **Update from AONB Officer**

The AONB Officer provided a brief verbal update

Wenffrwd Nature Reserve

The circular foot path was now complete. The reserve was a fantastic initiative and a credit to David and the OPL Team and Ranger Team.

Friends of the Clwydian Range:
Newsletter

The AONB Officer said that twenty-three newsletters had now been produced. The newsletters were always a very interesting read and full of news of the AONB. He acknowledged the time and work that went into producing the newsletter and he thanked John Roberts and all of the Friends members involved.

New AONB Team Member:
Climate Change Officer

Tom Johnston had recently been appointed as the Strategic AONB Climate Change, Green Infrastructure and

Catchments Officer. Tom was already making good progress on a number of projects and will brief the Partnership at their next meeting.

AONB Highways Design

Craggatak via Paul Tiplady are drafting a report on Highways Design.

Heritage, Culture & Communities Working Group

The group had completed site visits to Chirk Castle and Plas Newydd.

Action

All Working Groups to start to meet again.

AONB Forum

The Theme for this year was Heritage and Culture.

Chair of the Group Christine Evans and Ashley Batten, Fiona and Ian Grant and Chris Jones had all given interesting and relevant presentations.

The Forum was held at the Community Hwb, Llysfas, and had good attendance.

AONB Awards

The Awards had been presented by the Chair of the Joint Committee to

- Ysgol y Foel, Cilcain
- Llanferres Art Group (Country Park Painters)

Levelling up Fund

The Cynwyd to Corwen line was being considered along with the signal box in Prestatyn.

Sustainable Development Fund

Eight Projects had now been completed.

5. Any Other Business

Application for Dark Sky Status

Supplementary Guidance (SPG) for Dark Skies

David explained that the guidance was based on best practice regarding lighting, public consultations had been held and good feedback received. The document should be published by the end of the year.

Lighting at Loggerheads

All external lighting at Loggerheads had been replaced, car park lights were all down lit and all had movement sensors.

6. Future Meeting Dates

AONB Joint Committee Meeting	Friday 5 th November	2021	10:00	Venue to be decided
AONB Partnership Meeting	Friday 4 th February	2022	10:00	Venue to be decided
AONB Joint Committee Meeting	Friday 18 th March	2022	10:00	Venue to be decided
AONB Champions & Local Members Forum	Thursday 12 th May	2022	7 pm	Venue to be decided
AONB Partnership Meeting	Friday 20 th May	2022	10:00	Venue to be decided
AONB Joint Committee Meeting	Friday 24 th June	2022	10:00	Venue to be decided
AONB Annual Forum	Thursday 22 nd September	2022	7 pm	Venue to be decided
AONB Partnership Meeting	Friday 14 th October	2022	10:00	Venue to be decided
AONB Joint Committee Meeting	Friday 4 th November	2022	10:00	Venue to be decided

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