



**Meeting of the AONB Partnership
Friday 4th February
at 10:00
Online Teams Meeting**

In Attendance

AONB Partnership Members

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

Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

Howard Sutcliffe	AONB Officer
David Shiel	AONB Area Manager
Karen Weaver	AONB Coordinator
Rachel Jones	AONB North Senior Ranger
Kate Thomson	OPL Project Manager
Tom Johnstone	AONB Climate Change Officer

Chair of the Partnership
Andrew Worthington OBE

Representing Flintshire County Council
Tom Woodall Access and Natural
Environment Manager

Representing Rural Interest
Christine Evans, Roger Cragg

Representing Landscape Interest
Michael Skuse

Representing Natural Resources Wales
Alun Price Partnerships Officer
North East

Representing Urban Interest
Rajan Madhok

Representing the Natural Environment
Les Starling

Representing Land Management
Huw Morgan

Representing Recreation and ROW
John Roberts

Apologies for absence were submitted from:

Sandy Archdale, Hannah Arndt, Councillor Derek Butler, David Davies, Councillor Hugh Jones, Rhun Jones, Helen Job, Tony King, Cllr Christine Marston, Ian Papworth, Huw Rees

1.

The



come
Chair

opened the meeting and welcomed members to the Partnership.
He also welcomed National Resources Wales (NRW) Landscape Lead Specialist Advisor, Jill Bullen.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on October 15th 2021

The Chair explained that 'Matters Arising' would be covered within the meeting.

Page 2 AONB Management Plan

AONB Area Manager, David Shiel, provided an update on the progress of the plan and explained that it was now ready for public consultation. It would be hosted online via Denbighshire's portal for a period of eight weeks.

Housing within the AONB

The AONB Officer reported that a Meeting had been convened with DCC's Housing Officer. He would report the outcome at the next meeting.

Land Management Working Group - Species Recovery

A working group meeting had recently been held and the Curlew Recovery Action Plan was considered. However, unfortunately no funding was currently available to assist with the project. The AONB was working in partnership with RSPB in its southern areas.

Application for Dark Sky Status

Supplementary Guidance (SPG) for Dark Skies

AONB Area Manager, David Shiel, reported that the guidance had now been adopted by Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) and Denbighshire County Council (DCC). And a decision was awaited from Flintshire County Council (FCC). Once fully adopted the document would be published.

Dark Sky Festival

The festival, which would be held in February, was in partnership with all of the protected landscapes in Wales. Further information to follow.

Mobile Observatory – A mobile observatory along with a planetarium would be purchased to assist with events.

External Lighting

Sky quality across all of the AONB had been monitored over a period of four years. Llangollen and Fron had been identified as being the least dark sky friendly areas and would be prioritised for consideration for a change of external lighting. However, some external lighting had already been replaced in Llangollen that conformed with the status. Additional funding had been applied for.

International Dark Sky Association (IDA)

It was hoped that the application process would shortly be reopened.

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

2b. Minutes of Our Picturesque Landscape Steering Group Meeting

A copy of the OPL Quarterly Report had previously been circulated.

Partnership Officer, Kate Thomson, provided an update on some of the projects:

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| Restoration the redundant Lengths Man's Hut | - The hut was being restored to create a visitor welcome station, or for other community benefit. Welsh Government funding had been obtained to progress the project. |
| Pontcysyllte Woodlands | - Tree thinning had been completed at the aqueduct, despite weather problems. |
| Dinas Bran Gate House | - Reconsolidation work was being completed by Cadw at the Gatehouse. |
| Wenffrwd pocket park/ Nature Reserve | - In partnership with local people interpretation had been completed. An Artists in Residence poetry tour to be held. |

AONB Area Manager, David Shiel, explained that the tree thinning work to open up some of the key views of the aqueduct had been an aspiration of the project for some considerable time, and the process had been challenging. The work was now complete and this was a great achievement for the project. It was agreed that bringing the original views back again, was a great achievement and the OPL Team were congratulated for all of their hard work.

Action

- It was proposed that the next Partnership meeting be held at Glyndyfrdwy Village Hall, followed by a site visit to the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.
- A site visit was also proposed to Gwaenyngor.

3. Landscape and Nature Recovery in a Changing Climate - Implications for the AONB.

NRW Lead Landscape Specialist Advisor, Jill Bullen gave a PowerPoint presentation and explained that the publication had been produced in order to provide initial guidance on landscape change in a changing climate. It was a collaborative project between NRW and the AONB. Jill reiterated that partnership working and inclusivity with different sectors was vital for its success.

In discussion it was raised whether wind turbines had been considered, it was explained they had not been included in the document. However, small turbines along with solar panels on farmland could be relevant. It was noted that not all landscape change and decline in habitat was due to climate change, in some incidents it was neglect, for example Ash Die Back.

In summing up the Chair said that partnership working would be key.

Action

- Hard copies of the publication were available, from Loggerheads.
Please bring to Karen's attention if you would like a copy reserved.

4. The Work of the Ranger Team

Senior Ranger, Rachel Jones, gave presentation highlighting some of the projects that were being undertaken by the Ranger Team in the North of the AONB (Llanarmon yn Ial to Prestatyn Hillside - including Loggerheads Country Park).

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| Moel Findeg | - Board walk installed and kissing gate. |
| Loggerheads | - Bridge repair work carried out. |
| | - |
| Prestatyn Hillside | - Repair work completed on Offa's Dyke Path and 50th year celebrations held. |
| Grazing Project | - The project would shortly be coming to an end. |

Members agreed that there were some very interesting projects and partnership work being undertaken, and thanked Rachel for a most interesting presentation.

5. Update from the AONB Officer

AONB Officer, Howard Sutcliffe, reported that currently work was in progress in every corner of the AONB, but this was only possible when sufficient staff were available. All of the Working Groups (apart from the Tourism Group) had met at least once via Teams.

Team Update

The AONB Sustainable Development Officer, Ceri Lloyd had recently commenced her maternity leave and Jillian Howe and Ros Stockdale would be covering her role.

Tom Johnstone had recently joined the Team, and was a very good addition.

AONB Planning Officer

Planning Officer, Tony Hughes had recently retired. Tony had been a constant support since the very beginning of the AONB and his knowledge, wealth of expertise and advice with many issues over the years had always been sound.

All agreed that Tony had been an excellent Planning Officer who would be sadly missed.

Action

The Chair to send a letter of thanks to the Planning Officer.

6. A National Park for North East Wales

The AONB Officer provided a brief update explaining that the allocation of funding for National Park Status was currently being considered by Welsh Government, and that six Local Authorities were now being consulted. The Chief Executive for the Campaign for National Parks, Rose O'Neill had recently met with the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, to express support for Welsh Government's intention to create a National park in North East Wales, Julie had also expressed an interest in visiting the AONB. First Minister, Mark Drakeford, was also supportive of the designation. He went on to explain that the AONB was not considered large enough for National Park status and other suitable adjacent areas would be considered for inclusion in the designation.

The Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley had recently held an online event and the guest speaker was the Director of the Cymdeithas Eryri Snowdonia Society, John Harold. John had provided some background information about the society and shared some experiences of what it was like to be part of a National Park. The event had excellent attendance and it was hoped that this would be the first in a series of meetings.

The AONB Officer reiterated that it was key to work in partnership with the people who lived and worked within the AONB. Concerns were raised regarding the recent amount of developments within the AONB without any planning permissions. It was recognised that if National Park status was gained it would have its own planning authority and such matters could be dealt with promptly and efficiently.

It was proposed that a list of key points should be compiled which would be useful for reference for any forthcoming meetings.

Action

- A representative from National Resources Wales to be invited to the next meeting.
- Visit by the Minister for Climate Change Julie James MS to be followed up.

7. An Introduction to Climate Change and Green Infrastructure Initiatives in the AONB

Recently appointed Strategic AONB Climate Change, Green Infrastructure & Catchments Officer, Tom Johnstone provided a brief presentation highlighting some of the projects that he managing:

- Llangollen Green Infrastructure
- Cycling Infrastructure, Fixed Point Photography
- E-UTV demo and procurement
- Designated Landscape Carbon Neutral Opportunities

Cllr Martyn Holland raised concerns regarding illegal off road biking and quad biking within the AONB. He went on to explain that he was in contact with North Wales Police, landowners and Trail Rider Foundation (TRF) regarding the matter. Illegal bike riders were a continuing problem within the AONB. The Chair thanked Tom for his a most interesting presentation.

8. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

9. Future Meeting Dates

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