

**NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AREA
OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors Tony Thomas (Chair) and Bobby Feeley (Denbighshire County Council)
Councillors Glyn Banks (Flintshire County Council)
Councillor David Kelly (Wrexham County Borough Council)

ALSO PRESENT

Steve Gadd (Head of Finance and Property DCC), Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer DCC), David Shiel (Assistant AONB Officer DCC), Karen Weaver (AONB Co-ordinator DCC), Huw Rees (Countryside & Heritage Services Manager DCC), Ceri Lloyd (AONB SDF Officer), Rachel Jones (AONB Team Leader North), Tom Woodall (Access and Natural Environment Manager), Rhun Jones (AONB Officer), Alun Price (Natural Resources Wales), Fiona Grant (Cadw), Chris Smith (Senior Planning Policy Officer, WCBC), Lisa Jones and Sandra Williams (Translator, WCBC)

1. INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor Derek Butler (FCC), Councillor Hugh Jones (WCBC), Linda Sharp (Head of Planning Policy, WCBC), Paula O'Hanlon (Senior Finance Officer, DCC), Ashley Battern (Cadw), Kate Thomson, and Helen Mrowiec.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 JUNE 2021

The minutes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on 25 June 2021 were received and agreed as accurate.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on 25 June 2021 be approved.

3. DRAFT MINUTES OF AONB PARTNERSHIP HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2021

The draft notes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership held on 15 October 2021 were received for information. Howard Sutcliffe summarised the key points relating to tourism development, national parks and housing need, which could be future topics for discussion.

RESOLVED - That the notes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership meeting held on 15 October 2021 be noted.

4. JOINT COMMITTEE FINANCIAL REPORT (STANDING ITEM)

Steve Gadd (Head of Finance and Property) introduced his report which provided an update on the AONB's financial position for 2021/22.

The current forecast outturn was an overspend of £8,750 arising from maternity cover from December and increased travel costs; this amount would be drawn down from remaining revenue reserves. The impact of reducing reserves levels would need to form part of budget considerations for future years.

It was noted that resource issues in Audit Wales had resulted in a delay in the process for reporting the final accounts.

In response to a question on Covid grants from Councillor David Kelly, officers explained that there had been changes to eligibility criteria and that the Hardship Fund would not be available for the next financial year. They gave examples where grant claims had been maximised to support Assistant Rangers and Countryside Services amongst others.

RESOLVED - That the financial outturn for 2020/21 (Appendix 1) and the progress against the agreed budget strategy be noted.

5. AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN PRESENTATION AND REPORT

David Shiel (AONB Area Manager) presented his report together with the draft Management Plan for the AONB 2020-2025 to set priorities for the management across the Special Features and Qualities of the AONB over the next five years.

He gave a presentation covering the following:

- Statutory duty - AONBs to produce a management plan for the designated area.
- Three sections - the State of the AONB report; AONB Management Strategy; and the AONB Action Plan.
- Development of the Plan - identifying core stakeholders and mapping exercise to determine wider interest.
- Stakeholder consultation - the online questionnaire had generated over 500 responses followed by a workshop held in Autumn 2020 to agree priorities and objectives.
- Priorities identified - Emotional aspects such as Tranquility, Remoteness and Wildness, Space and Freedom were considered to be the most important. Climate Change and Species Decline were identified as the most significant challenges.

- Four key themes - Nature, Landscape and Heritage; Adapting to a Changing Climate; Recreation, Health and Well-being; and the Rural Economy.
- Next Steps - Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment followed by the formal public consultation process once approved by this Committee.

In response to local issues of concern in Minera raised by Councillor David Kelly, David Shiel agreed to liaise with WCBC officers. He confirmed that Supplementary Plan Guidance on the Dark Skies initiative would be submitted to the Planning Committee before being formally adopted by the three Authorities.

On the Health and Well-being theme, Councillor David Kelly highlighted the Community Miles project and schemes promoted by the Ramblers' Association. David Shiel also reported on funding to improve access from Minera mountain to the Wildlife Trust reserve.

Councillor David Kelly advised of plans by WCBC Executive to apply for 'Fields in Trust' status for most of its country parks to protect those sites from future development. He also reported on proposals to renovate the telephone box in New Brighton and to install defibrillator units in four communities.

On Health and Well-being, Councillor Bobby Feeley said that following a complaint by a member of the public about the condition of stiles, it appeared that some farmers were actively discouraging dog walkers from using Rights of Way on their land. David Shiel acknowledged the challenges in making footpaths accessible to all, despite the legal duty upon landowners, and said that the Community Miles project aimed at improving accessibility. Howard Sutcliffe said that such cases discriminated against individuals who were unable to use a stile and he agreed to liaise with Councillor Feeley to raise the matter through the WLGA.

On the promotion of kissing gates, Councillor Glyn Banks reported problems in Flintshire with oversized scooters. He also asked about the potential to include a route from Llanasa covering the Gronant dunes and Talacre warren area including the lighthouse. Howard Sutcliffe said that this was outside the scope of the view but that it could be considered in future. Councillor Banks also took the opportunity to commend the positive relationship between Countryside officers in Denbighshire and Flintshire County Councils.

In response to comments from Councillor David Kelly, David Shiel said that regular campaigns were proving effective in raising awareness of the risks to livestock from off-lead dogs. He also reported on officer participation on a national working group looking at potential changes in the law on dogs in the countryside.

Councillor David Kelly raised a query on traps being used on Ruabon moor. David Shiel confirmed that officers were aware and that there was good engagement with the estate office.

Following a suggestion by Lisa Jones, it was agreed that the Well-being Assessment would accompany the Management Plan when it was brought back to the Committee following the consultation period.

RESOLVED - That the Joint Committee accepts the draft Management Plan and approves it for public consultation. That the Well-being Assessment be brought back to the Committee with the Management Plan following public consultation.

6. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer, DCC) presented the forward work programme with the following updates:

- Risk register, including risks to the AONB, to accompany the final accounts at the next meeting.
- NRW core AONB funding offer now received.
- AONB Tourism Plan currently advertised on Proactis and out to tender.
- Delayed response from DCC officers on Highways guidance may require liaison with FCC or WCBC to progress.

The Chair and Councillor Bobby Feeley asked that Howard pass on their best wishes to Tony Hughes (AONB Officer) who was due to retire.

RESOLVED - That the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee notes the forward work programme.

7. FUTURE MEETING DATES

Friday, 18 March 2022
Friday, 24 June 2022
Friday, 4 November 2022

(The meeting started at 10.05am and ended at 11.30am)

Councillor Tony Thomas
Chair