

Meeting of the AONB Partnership
Friday 14th October 2022
at 10:00
Community Hwb, Coleg Llysfasi

In Attendance

AONB Partnership Members

Councillor Win Mullen-James DCC
Chair of the Joint Committee

Councillor Alan James DCC
Councillor Martyn Hogg DCC
Councillor David Healey FCC

Chair of the Partnership
Andrew Worthington OBE

Representing Rural Interest
Dr Christine Evans, Roger Cragg

Representing Landscape Interest
Michael Skuse

Representing Urban Interest
Ian Papworth

Representing the Natural Environment
Les Starling

Representing Land Management
Sandy Archdale, Rhian Pierce

Representing Recreation & Rights of Way
John Roberts

Representing Individual Interest
David Davies

Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

Howard Sutcliffe AONB Officer
David Shiel AONB Area Manager
Karen Weaver AONB Coordinator
Rachel Jones AONB North Senior Ranger
Hannah Arndt Access & Recreation Officer
Graham Berry Moorland Officer
Rhun Jones Senior South Ranger
Tom Johnstone AONB Climate Change
Infrastructure & Catchments Officer Green

Representing Flintshire County Council
Derrick Charlton Rights of Way Officer

Representing Denbighshire County Council
Huw Rees Countryside & Heritage
Services Manager

Representing Wrexham County Borough Council
Mike Bather World Heritage Site (WHS)

Apologies for absence were submitted from:

Cllr Anthony Wedlock (WCBC), Cllr David Hughes (FCC), Cllr Hugh Jones (WCBC),
Cllr Jonathon Harland (DCC), Fiona Gale, Carole Rothwell, Del Roberts Jones, Ceri Lloyd,
Alun Price, Huw Morgan, Rajan Madhok, Tom Woodall, Kate Thomson.

1. **Welcome & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed new members Cllr Win Mullen-James, Cllr Alan James, Cllr Martyn Hogg, Cllr David Healey, Derrick Charlton, Mike Bather to the meeting. Members introduces themselves around the table.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on Friday 20th May 2022**

David Davies to be added to the meeting attendance.

Matters arising

AONB Management Plan

AONB Area Manager, David Shiel, reported that the plan was in draft form and would be taken to the Joint Committee Meeting next month.

AONB Recreation Plan

More funding had been granted, and further work would be done in the Northern area of the AONB. Access & Recreation Officer, Hannah Arndt was working on the Plan. Members discussed congestion along the road to Pen Barras, and David Shiel explained that this summer there had been some improvement. A new barrier system had been installed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) at the bottom car park, and so far, it had been successful.

Horseshoe Falls

Members discussed the ongoing parking issues at Horseshoe Falls, and the yellow lines now in place. However, they were largely ignored by visitors. David Shiel said that the issues had been raised with DCC and Street Scene, and that the AONB Team would assist as much as possible over the winter months, however, staffing capacity would make a significant difference. Two officers were currently employed with DCC at weekends for enforcement issues, however both were based at Prestatyn.

Cllr Win Mullen-James said that a meeting would be held to consider parking, enforcement and all the costs involved.

2b Minutes of Our Picturesque Landscape Project (OPL)

David Shiel explained that Project Officer, Kate Thomson, had moved on to another role with DCC Heritage Services, however, she remained working for the project for two days a week. Hannah Marubbi would take over the role of Project Officer in the New Year.

Reconsolidation work was currently being done at Castell Dinas Bran.

All agreed that Kate and the Team had made some fantastic improvements.

Action

Message of thanks to be given on behalf of the Partnership to Kate Thomson.

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

3. **Overview of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

AONB Officer, Howard Sutcliffe, made a PowerPoint presentation

(see attached) This provided an overview of the AONB including

the Shepherds Hut at Pen Barras, the Grazing Project at Prestatyn Hillside, the new car park at Graig Fawr, World Heritage Site, National Grid and Scottish Power Networks schemes.

Concerns were raised regarding toilet facilities being closed down over the past few years, and also the importance of livestock in the AONB.

Moorland Management of the AONB

Moorland Officer, Graham Berry explained that Rangers were regularly on site to extinguish any fires over the summer, and that it was very fortunate that no major fires occurred.

Grazing Project at Prestatyn hillside

Senior Ranger for the North of the AONB, Rachel Jones, explained that the stock would be supplied by a local farmer. Concerns were raised regarding dog worrying, and Rachel responded that dog worrying had been considered and specific areas had been proposed for dog walkers to let their dogs off leads.

Prestatyn Roman Bath House

It was raised that the Bath House was not within the AONB boundary. Howard responded that the site was very close to the boundary and was iconic and significant.

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) had contributed to the project.

Rights of Way (ROW)

Public Access was raised as not being included within the presentation, and it was reported that there was a lot of outstanding work to be completed on ROW.

In summing up the Chair said that resources were the issue with the concerns raised, and with a National Park status extra funding would be available to address the issues.

4. **Review of the AONB Working Group Membership**

The AONB Working Groups

1. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)
2. Recreation, Health & Wellbeing
3. Landscape Character and the Built Environment
4. Heritage, Culture and Communities
5. Sustainable Tourism & Business Engagement
6. Natural Environment & Land Management

The AONB Officer, Howard Sutcliffe, provided a verbal update explaining that the current working groups were suitable for the previous Management Plan, however, the new Management Plan would be worded slightly differently and would include climate change, nature recovery, rural economy (following Brexit).

4a Sustainable Tourism & Business Engagement Group

Howard said that the AONB contributed to DCC Tourism Group, Clwydian Range (CR) Tourism Group, and in order to avoid a duplication of meetings he proposed that CR Tourism Group reported back to the Partnership.

4b Natural Environment & Land Management

The AONB contributed to the Bionet Group and Howard proposed that the Bionet Group reported back to the partnership, to avoid duplication.

It was proposed that a 'Climate Change and Nature Recovery' Working Group be convened.

It was proposed that a group be convened with the people who lived and worked within the AONB.

Summing up the Chair asked for members to consider whether they agreed for the groups to be reviewed and asked AONB Officers to prepare a document to be circulated to members.

Action

- ✚ That all the Working Groups would be reviewed and a document be prepared and sent to all members.
- ✚ All responses to be submitted to the Chair.

5. **AONB Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)**

David Shiel provided a PowerPoint presentation; this explained the funding that National Grid provided to AONB's and National Parks for undergrounding. A maximum of three projects could be completed at any time, with a budget of £200k for each project.

Howard was the representative on the National Grid Board for all the AONB's in Wales,

Restoring the heather at Llantysilio

Heather seeding had been carried out on the severely damaged areas and nature recovery had been good in some places.

Roadside Verges

DCC had a policy for the verges, and they were managed by DCC Biodiversity Team, Street Scene and the local communities. It was noted that sometimes private owners would not comply with the DCC policy.

It was agreed that grass cutting was a major problem for the authorities.

Curlew Project

Rhian Peirce said that she worked part time with RSPB and raised concerns that the hedgerows could create a corridor for foxes, which could be problematic for nesting curlew. David responded that the decline of the curlew had been targeted by the AONB, and the AONB Team were members of 'Curlew Cymru project' to respond to the decline. The AONB had developed good relationships with farmers and landowners, and there was a lot of work being completed. The AONB would like to build on this work.

Morwynion Valley

Work being done in less well-known areas of the AONB was welcomed.

In summing up the Chair said that the AONB had secured five successful grants, which was an extremely difficult process, and he congratulated the Team for their achievement, and added that the base budget that the AONB received was very low and the funding and resources that the Team brought in was remarkable.

6. Update from the AONB Officer

The AONB Officer explained that the AONB hoped to get back to face to face meetings, however, the next Joint Committee Meeting would have to be held online which was disappointing.

Membership of the Partnership

Archaeologist, Fiona Gale had recently agreed to join the Partnership.

AONB Appointments

Former Partnership member, Huw Morgan had been appointed by the AONB as Landscape and Farming Officer. An Engagement Officer would be appointed shortly.

Landscape & Nature Recovery in a Changing Climate Publication

The publication had been nominated for an award from the Landscape Institute, and the winner of the award would be announced at the end of the month.

Llangollen Green Infrastructure Project

The booklet had now been published.

Fossil Fuel Free Tools and Transport

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) event had recently been held at Chirk Castle, with good attendance.

Fixed Point Photography Project

The cameras had now been installed at, Loggerheads, Prestatyn, Pontcysyllte.

AONB Climate Change, Green Infrastructure and Catchments Officer

Tom Johnstone would be leaving the AONB shortly to commence work with the Brecon Beacons National Park. Howard said that Tom had achieved a lot within the twelve months that he had been with the AONB, and he thanked him for all his hard work and wished him well for the future.

6a National Park for Northeast Wales

The AONB Officer said that Leslie Griffiths MS had been appointed as the Minister for Environment. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) had recently appointed a Team to move the project forward. NRW representatives would be invited to attend the next Partnership Meeting to provide an update on the project. The importance of the AONB being involved in all of the process was reiterated, along with engagement for landowners and farmers.

It was explained that DCC were producing a strategy and that no consultations had been held to date.

The Chair said that NRW were leading on the project and the AONB would assist them in the process. No formal consultations had taken place to date however, the farming community would be foremost in any talks and consideration.

Action

- ✚ NRW representatives to be invited to give an update at the next meeting

6b **AONB Award for 2022**

The AONB Officer proposed that the award for this year be given to long standing Partnership member, Dr Christine Evans. He went on to explain that Christine was Chair of the Heritage, Culture & Communities Working Group, and always made every effort to attend meetings and site visits and sometimes used the mobility Trampler. She was also a Trustee for the Friends of the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley. Christine had brought the village of Llanarmon yn Ial alive, through the community pub, the Raven, and volunteering at the community shop. Christine's enthusiasm and willingness to help in any way that she can had been greatly appreciated by the AONB.

Action

- It was unanimously agreed that Dr Christine Evans to be presented with the AONB Award for 2022

Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

7. **Summing up of the Meeting from the Chair**

In summing up the meeting the Chair said that parking issues would be considered, along with a review of the Working Groups, with reports being distributed.

The LEI project was a fine example of funding brought into the service.

The publication guides that Tom had completed were excellent.

It was hoped that the AONB and AONB Partnership would be fully involved in the National Park status. He congratulated Dr Christine Evans on her attainment of the AONB award.

8. **Future Meeting Dates**

AONB Partnership Meeting	Friday 3 rd February	2023	10:00	To be decided
AONB Joint Committee Meeting	Friday 10 th November	2022	10:00	Online
AONB Forum	Wednesday 23 rd November	2022	18:30	Coleg Cambria, Community Hwb
AONB Joint Committee	Friday 17 th March	2023	10:00	To be decided
AONB Partnership Meeting	Friday 19 th May	2023	10:00	To be decided