

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2022**

AONB JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors: Win Mullin-James (Denbighshire County Council); Councillors Dave Hughes and David Healey (Flintshire County Council); Councillors Nigel Williams and Hugh Jones (Wrexham County Borough Council)

ALSO PRESENT

Steve Gadd (Head of Finance and Property DCC), Mike Bather (Wrexham County Borough Council), Ceri Lloyd (AONB SDF Officer), Paula O'Hanlon (Senior Finance Officer, DCC), Alun Price (Natural Resources Wales), Huw Rees (Countryside & Heritage Services Manager DCC), Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer), Karen Weaver (AONB Co-ordinator), Andrew Worthington, (Chair of the AONB Partnership), Tom Woodall (Access and Natural Environment Manager Flintshire County Council), and Paul Rowlinson(Translator)

Councillors Gareth Sandilands and Bobby Feeley (Denbighshire County Council) attended as an observer

1. INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Joint Committee Member Emrys Wynne (Denbighshire County Council)

There were no declarations of interest.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Nominations were sought for the appointment of a Chair for the Committee. Councillor David Healey nominated Councillor Dave Hughes and this was seconded by Councillor Nigel Williams. No other nominations were put forward.

Nominations were sought for the appointment of a Vice-Chair for the Committee. Councillor Dave Hughes nominated Councillor Nigel Williams and this was duly seconded.

Councillor Dave Hughes chaired the meeting from this point.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Councillor Dave Hughes be appointed Chair of the Committee; and
- (b) That Councillor Nigel Williams be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. PROPOSED ADOPTION OF AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

Howard Sutcliffe introduced a report on the AONB Management Plan which was appended for consideration. He advised that the Plan had been circulated for consultation and a summary of the representations received were detailed on pages 9 – 11 of the report. The representations had been included and approval was sought for adoption of the draft Management Plan for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and publication recommended.

RESOLVED

That the draft Management Plan for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB be adopted and publication recommended

4. VARIATION TO LEGAL AGREEMENT ON INCREASING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE TO THREE PER AUTHORITY

Howard Sutcliffe provided background information on the proposal and advised that the current position was that each local authority could have two members nominated to the Joint Committee. He explained that the variation proposed two options which were to increase the number of nominations to 3 members or have a named substitute. Following discussion, it was agreed that Councillors Dave Hughes and Nigel Williams would seek legal advice on the proposal from officers in their local authority and provide feedback to the Committee.

5. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AONB JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 5 NOVEMBER 2021

The minutes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on 5 November 2021 were submitted. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on 5 November 2021 be approved.

6. DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AONB PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS 2021

The draft minutes of the following Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership were received for information.

- 4 February 2022
- 20 May 2022
- 14 October 2022

Andy Worthington, Chair of the AONB Partnership, provided feedback on the meeting held on 14 October 2022. He referred to the main points of discussion, as detailed in the minutes, and reported on progress achieved to date.

Referring to the AONB Award 2022 presented to Dr Christine Evans, the Chair suggested that the Committee writes to express thanks for the hard work and support given by individuals who received the Award.

Howard Sutcliffe proposed that a second award be made to National Grid for their 8 year investment of their fund- '*The Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)*' which has seen a swathe of landscape improvements in the Morwinion Valley to the tune of over £600,000 being invested from the National Grid LEI Fund, and support which was provided to the AONB. This was seconded by the Chair and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership meetings held on 4 February, 20 May, and 14 October 2022 be noted.

7. JOINT COMMITTEE ANNUAL RETURN FINANCIAL REPORT

Steve Gadd, Head of Finance and Property, presented the report to provide an update on the AONB's financial position as at 31 March 2022 and seek approval of the budget for 2022/23. The report provided a summary of the AONB's revenue budget outturn for 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix 1. The final outturn position showed an overall overspend of £27,008 which had been taken from the revenue Reserve. The report also provided a copy of the Annual Return for smaller local government bodies in Wales for the year ended 31 March 2022 (Appendix 3) for consideration and approval. The return had been audited by Denbighshire Internal Audit.

The Head of Finance and Property reported on the key considerations as detailed in the report. Members were asked to note the financial outturn for 2021/22 (Appendix 1) and the Reserve Balances as at 31st March 2022 (Appendix 4). Members were asked to formally approve the 2022/23 draft budget (Appendix 2) and review and sign the Annual Return for 2021/22 (Appendix 3). The approval and signing of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2022 (Appendix 3) was a statutory requirement prior to Audit Wales carrying out an audit of the accounts.

The Head of Finance and Property advised that as at the 31 March 2022 the balance in the AONB Reserve (appendix 4) stood at £421,384. Of this, £391,551 was earmarked for specific projects which would progress during the 2022/23 financial year. The balance of £29,833 was available to support the 2022/23 revenue budget and it is expected that most of this will be required in 2022/23.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the financial outturn for 2021/22 (Appendix 1) and the Reserve Balances as at 31st March 2022 (Appendix 4) be noted;
- (b) That the 2022/23 draft budget (appendix 2) be approved; and

(c) That the Annual Return for 2021/22 (Appendix 3) be signed.

8. PROPOSED NATIONAL PARK

Howard Sutcliffe gave a verbal update on the proposed National Park. He commented on the progress achieved with Natural Resources Wales, and to the discussions taking place concerning proposals on boundary areas.

9. DRAFT RISK REGISTER

Howard Sutcliffe presented the draft risk register. He referred to risk number 3: Loss of funding from Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and commented that the NRW Core AONB grant funding for this year had not yet been received and proposed that concerns be escalated to the Chief Executive.

Steve Gadd commented on the potential high impact of risks 2 and 3 and the financial challenges facing the public sector during the next few years

10. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Howard Sutcliffe presented the forward work programme and gave a verbal update on progress on the items listed.

The Chair expressed concerns around the ongoing uncertainty around future funding from National and Welsh Governments for local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the forward work programme be noted.

11. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The next meeting dates of the AONB Joint Committee are as follows:

Friday, 17 March 2023

Friday, 23 June 2023

Friday, 17 November 2023

(The meeting started at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 11.50 a.m.)