

## **CLWYDIAN RANGE AND DEE VALLEY AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY JOINT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Friday, 17 March 2023 at 10.00 am.

### **AONB JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

Councillors Win Mullen-James (DCC), David Healey (FCC), Dave Hughes (FCC), Hugh Jones (WCBC) and Nigel Williams (WCBC)

### **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), Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer), David Shiel (AONB Area Manager), Ceri Lloyd (Sustainable Development Officer), (Karen Weaver (AONB Co-ordinator), Clare Lord (Solicitor/Places Team Leader), Stephanie Jones (Committee Administrator/Zoom Host) and Karen Evans (Scrutiny Coordinator/Minutes) and Marian Harvey (Translator)

Councillors Karen Edwards and James Elson (DCC) attended as observers.

## **1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The meeting was opened by the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Officer and Ranger Service Manager, Howard Sutcliffe. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and suggested to the Chair, Councillor David Hughes and Vice Chair Councillor Nigel Williams that Win Mullen-James - who was present in the Council Chamber – chair the meeting as they could see both virtual and physical attendees. Councillors Hughes and Williams agreed.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

## **2 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING (HS)**

The minutes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on 10 November 2022 were submitted.

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising:

Item 4 – Variation to the legal agreement on increasing the membership of the Joint Committee to three per Authority. It was noted that Denbighshire County Council's constitution allowed for a substitute representative to be nominated if neither of its members could attend. Confirmation was awaited with respect to Flintshire County

Council and Wrexham County Borough Council's position. The AONB Officer to follow up with WCBC.

Item 6 – Draft Minutes of previous AONB Partnership meeting. An award was being made to National Grid for their Landscape Enhancement Initiative. Invitations to the award ceremony had been circulated.

**RESOLVED:** *That the minutes of Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on 10 November 2022 be approved.*

### **3 DRAFT MINUTES OF AONB PARTNERSHIP (HS)**

The draft minutes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022 were received for information.

A number of Services had been involved in an action plan to avoid the congestion that had occurred at Horseshoe Falls in previous years including:

- Height barrier on car park which would restrict large vehicles entering the car park and
- Ensuring visible yellow lines.

Prestatyn Roman Bath House was featured as an exhibition at Prestatyn library that had been well attended, particularly by school groups.

**RESOLVED:** *That the minutes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022 be noted.*

### **4 DRAFT MINUTES OF OUR PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP (DS)**

The draft minutes of Our Picturesque Landscape Partnership meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023 were received for information.

Work had been completed at Castell Dinas Bran Gate House. The spoil removed as part of the excavation had been used to improve the zig zag access path.

The Picturesque Bus service would be running for the third year around sites within the Dee Valley area and including Llangollen Pavilion car park to help to alleviate some of the parking issues.

Preparation was underway working with local artists and communities for the final exhibition of the year at the Dory Gallery in Llangollen.

Discussions were taking place between the Partnership and Lottery funding regarding the possibility of extending the project, to make up for the 2 years lost to Covid restrictions.

**RESOLVED:** *that the draft minutes of Our Picturesque Landscape Partnership meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023 were noted.*

## **5 10 YEAR REVIEW AND UPDATE OF AONB GOVERNANCE 2023 VERBAL (HS)**

The AONB Officer and Ranger Service Manager, Howard Sutcliffe (HS) reminded the Committee that the legal agreement for the Joint Committee had been reviewed and updated 18 months previously. Going forward a review would be undertaken of the Terms of Reference for the Partnership and new terms of reference for the Champions, as well as reviewing the working groups, linking them to the chapter headings contained in the Management Plan.

A recruitment drive of AONB Champions from Community Councils to assist with practical conservation and stewarding of busy areas at weekends was ongoing. There had been a meeting at Llysfasi College that had been received well, feedback included the desire for more regular contact.

Training for AONB Champions / volunteer rangers would begin shortly.

**RESOLVED:** *that the update on the 10 year review and AONB governance be noted.*

## **6 JOINT COMMITTEE ANNUAL RETURN FINANCIAL REPORT (STANDING ITEM) (SG AND PO'H)**

The Head of Finance and Property, Steve Gadd (SG) advised that the report was not the annual return – that had been approved and signed off at the previous meeting – but was a normal monitoring report.

The report showed that despite the difficult period of increased inflation there was no cause for concern. There had been no overspend and as a result of additional money from Welsh Government only a minor draw down from reserves which would be carried forward to the next financial year.

The Committee extended their thanks to the Senior Finance and Assurance Officer, Paula O'Hanlon for their continued assistance with grant applications and budgeting etc. stressing the importance that continuity had on the delivery of AONB projects.

**RESOLVED:** *that the AONB Joint Committee Outturn and Accounts 2022/23 be noted.*

## **7 UPDATE ON NATIONAL PARK FOR NORTH EAST WALES (NRW)**

HS gave an update on the progress of assigning National Park Status in North East Wales from an email received from Natural Resources Wales (NRW). He explained that it was a slow legislative process but it was hoped that National Park status could be established before the end of the Senedd term (May 2026).

A full team had been appointed to the project in 2022 and had commenced work on the area of search. It was anticipated that they would soon be in a position to share

that information with stakeholders – Local Authorities and AONB Joint Committee etc. An NRW representative, Ash Pierce, would be invited to the next AONB JC on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

Members of the Committee asked that the AONB JC be part of meaningful consultation over the agreed area of search rather than having it delivered as a fait accompli.

**RESOLVED:**

- I. The NRW email update be circulated to members of the AONB Joint Committee and*
- II. the update report on a National Park for North East Wales be noted.*

**8 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (STANDING ITEM)**

HS presented the forward work programme and gave a verbal update on progress on the items listed highlighting:

- Changes to NRW's grant allocations leading to the loss of £20k had been covered by Welsh Government's Gap Fund.
- The Tourism Plan was progressing, Snowdonia Active had been commissioned to prepare a joint view.
- Special Landscapes/Special Places had two more years to run.
- Two Farming/Engagement Officers had been appointed.
- The All Wales Dark Skies project was progressing well. Dark Skies week had seen 5 events held within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.
- An application had been made to the International Dark Skies Association – only 8 applications were accepted each year.
- Good Lighting Special Planning Guidance had been approved for both Denbighshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council – Flintshire County Council were still progressing its adoption.

**RESOLVED:** *that the Forward Work Programme be noted.*

**9 FUTURE MEETING DATES**

It was proposed that the Committee hold a brief meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023 to be followed by a tour around the AONB [*action Karen Weaver to seek availability and organise*]

**RESOLVED:** *that the future meeting dates be noted.*

**Meeting concluded at 10:45 am.**