



Meeting of the AONB Partnership
Friday 19th May 2023
at 10:00
Coleg Cambria, Northop

In Attendance

AONB Partnership Members

Chair of the Partnership
Andrew Worthington OBE

Councillor Dave Hughes FCC
(Chair of the Joint Committee)
Councillor David Healy FCC

Representing Landscape Interest
Michael Skuse

Representing Urban Interest
Ian Papworth

Representing the Natural Environment
Les Starling

Representing Land Management
Huw Morgan, Sandy Archdale

Representing Recreation & Rights of Way
John Roberts

Representing Heritage & Rural Interest
Christine Evans, Fiona Gale

Representing Individual Interest
David Davies

Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB

Howard Sutcliffe AONB Officer
David Shiel AONB Area Manager
Karen Weaver AONB Coordinator
Steve Williams Countryside Ranger
& Project Officer
Graham Berry Moorland Officer
Ros Stockdale Development Officer
Huw Morgan Natural Resources
& Farming Officer

Representing Flintshire County Council (FCC)
Tom Woodall Access & Natural Environment
Manager

Representing Natural Resources Wales
Richard Dearing

Representing Wrexham County Borough Council
Sarah Brett Planning & Policy Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted from:

Mike Bather, Cllr Paul Cunningham, Paul Evans, Fiona Grant, Cllr Jon Harland, Cllr Martyn Hogg, Del Roberts Jones, Ceri Lloyd, Cllr Win Mullen-James, Helen Mrowiec, Rajan Madhok, Cllr Rondo Roberts, Cllr Anthony Wedlake, Kate Thomson,

1. Welcome



Apologies

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed new member Sarah Brett, (Planning and Policy Officer for Wrexham County Borough Council). Around the table introductions were completed.

2. Notes of Our Picturesque Landscape Project (OPL)

AONB Area Manager, David Shiel provided an update on the project:

2a Improving the View – Jeffrey’s Wood at Pontcysyllte

Phase 2 of the contractor works which began on 12th December had continued in January 2023 along the River Dee from Pontcysyllte Aqueduct towards to Ty Mawr Country Park. A great impact had been made on views through to the river and aqueduct pillars and the work was now complete.

Interpretation - New Interpretation panels had been installed that explained the full history of the World Heritage Site.

Engaging Communities - Workshop sessions had been held at Cefn Mawr with some disadvantaged groups.

Camera Obscura Event - Castell Dinas Brân

An exciting community event would be held on July 1st at Castell Dinas Brân. The event would be a step back in time to discover the history of Castell Dinas Brân through the ages. There would be activities for all the family including the use of the project’s Camera Obscura, a Victorian sweetshop, actors, vintage portraits, landscape painting workshops, traditional games and more.

A final artwork exhibition would be held at the Dory Gallery, Llangollen, in the autumn.
A book about the project was being drafted.

2b David went on to explain that two and a half years of the project time was within the covid/lockdown period, and that the project was due to end in November. Discussions were being held with the Heritage Lottery Fund regarding an extension of the project, to provide more workshops with local groups, and for further work to be done on recreational pressure.

The Chair thanked David and Hannah for all their work.

Action

- OPL Officer, Hannah Marubbi to be asked to give a presentation at a future Partnership meeting.

3. Review of the AONB Working Group Membership

AONB Area Manager, David Shiel gave a PowerPoint presentation, explaining that the Management Plan (that was adopted in November) would be the focus of work for the Working Groups, with the special features and qualities of the AONB being paramount.

He added that new areas /issues had been added to the new plan including climate change, nature and climate emergencies, and rural businesses.

David explained that there were a variety of groups and projects in progress that were not reporting back to the Partnership, for example the Local Access Forum, Tourism Groups, Grazing Project, Moorland project. All this work should be steered back to the Partnership. Development Officer, Ros Stockdale had made a mapping exercise of the Working Groups and had identified that some of these had not met for some considerable time. It was presumed that they therefore did not need to meet and task and finish groups may be considered for some areas of work. She would monitor and review the actions of the groups.

3a The new proposed groups were:

1. Landscape Character & the Built Environment
2. Habitats and Wildlife
3. Historic Environment
4. Access, Recreation & Tourism
5. Culture and People

3b Mrs Archdale raised concerns that some of her comments had not been included within the document and that CLA NFU FUW had attended but had not found the workshop useful. Howard Sutcliffe responded that the AONB now had two agricultural officers in post, and that they had visited large dairy farms and sheep farms and were in

constant contact with the farming community. In summing up the Chair said that the AONB would consider all the comments including: -

- That some groups had not met due to pressing issues including Covid and moorland fires, and members had respected officer time.
- It was paramount that the AONB worked together with the big estates, farms and small holdings and forestry.
- Northeast Wales Heritage Forum, and Flintshire Tourism Association were raised as potential external groups that could feed into the Partnership.
- Focused agendas and Terms of Reference for all the Groups was essential.
- Relation with the health service - health professionals could possibly be a separate group 'Health & Wellbeing'.

The Chair asked if members would endorse the recommendation regarding the future of the Working Groups. This was both agreed and endorsed.

Action

- Any external groups that could feed into the Partnership to be brought to Karen's attention.
- Information on the new Working Groups to be emailed to all members, and members to identify which group that they would like to sit on.

4. Review/General Update from AONB Officer including National Park for Northeast Wales Status

AONB Officer, Howard Sutcliffe, reported that National Grid had recently been presented with the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley AONB Award at Llandegla Community Shop. National Grid was now considering using the AONB as a pilot project for their infrastructure for the UK, they were also considering a new Sea Link grid. Howard commented that National Grid had provided a continuous avenue of income for the AONB, and that it was a disappointing that Ofwat and Ofcom were not so compatible to work with. A member raised the issue of the need to consider the archaeological implications of undergrounding and that this should be an important consideration in any application.

4a National Park for Northeast Wales

National Resources Wales (NRW) Lead Officer, Ash Pearce, had provided a written update on the 7th March (previously circulated). Ash was meeting with Lesley Griffiths MS on a regular basis and would provide another update at the next Joint Committee Meeting due to be held on 23rd June. Howard noted that he had recently featured on the ITV news to explain some of the opportunities that a National Park would bring to the area. A local business owner and landowner that were also featured were both supportive of the proposed designation. However, a farmer had some negative perceptions of the National Park, Howard intended to meet with him to discuss the concerns that he had raised. Several site visits had been made to farms and farming communities. Howard, Mari Jones and Huw Morgan had also attended a breakfast meeting with FUW.

Extension of the boundary of the AONB

An area south of Powys Castle could be considered for the extension. Powys Castle was prominent in the southern section. However, the boundary had not been confirmed to date.

Discussion was held and a member enquired how the farming community could raise their concerns if they were not in favour of a National Park, and what would the planning restrictions be. The Chair responded that there would be lots of opportunities for public consultations. However, small farming communities should firstly consider the opportunities and prospects that a National Park could bring. Regarding planning permissions within a National Park, the process would not be much different to the existing planning legislation already in place with the AONB, but there would be considerably more opportunities to generate income.

4b Levelling up Fund

An update was requested on the Levelling up Fund projects. AONB Area manager, David Shiel explained that currently consideration was being given to how the AONB manage Loggerheads Country Park and Moel Famau. He went on to explain that the Shepherd's hut located at Pen Barras, Moel Famau had been a huge success, and that having a staff presence had a positive impact on how visitors behaved. However, it was problematic towing

the hut to Pen Barras every day, and a permanent hub based at Pen Barras was being considered. A hub would provide much improved interaction with the visiting public. Extensive consideration would be given to sustainability, the landscape setting and design of any building proposed.

The deadline for the project was March 2025.

A member raised the Sill, National Landscape Discovery Centre, Northumberland National Park as a good example.

5. Any Other Business

- ✚ Welsh Government had passed a law which means that on 17th September the speed limit on all roads that have 30 mph would reduce to 20 mph – if any members had concerns now was the time to raise them.
- ✚ A member enquired why a plot of land in Llanarmon yn Ial that was included in the Local Development Plan had not been progressed. It was explained that NRW were concerned with the high phosphates levels in the rivers of Wales and that this was currently holding up many developments.
- ✚ Coed Bell Walk –Area Ranger, Steve Williams, had recently led a walk, in partnership with the Friends. It was a very successful day. The Friends now had a full events programme.
- ✚ OPL Bus – the free bus service would be running up until October all details on the AONB website. <https://www.clwydianrangeanddeevalleyaonb.org.uk/projects/the-picturesque-bus/>
- ✚ Dwr Cymru Wastewater – a member raised concerns regarding sewage overflow into the rivers, adding that additional funding 2.4 million had been provided to Dwr Cymru to assist with the problem. He enquired how this was being addressed. Howard responded that the wastewater works at Corwen were being upgraded. It was proposed that a representative from Dwr Cymru be invited to attend a future Partnership meeting.

6. Chair's Summing Up

The Chair said that he was looking forward to the event due to be held at Dinas Brân and hoped that the application for an extension to the OPL project would be successful. Highlighting the issues of the Management Plan, David and Ros had drafted a plan of the Working Groups which would email to members. They could then decide which group(s) that they would like to sit on. Regarding the proposal for a National Park, the Chair said that there would be concerns, however, he hoped that the majority of people would be in favour of the status as there would be some great opportunities for the area. On the Levelling up Fund, the proposed Hub at Pen Barras sounded a great facility.

7.Future Meeting Dates

AONB Champions & Community & Local Members Forum	Thursday 15 th June	Loggerheads Meeting Room
AONB Joint Committee Meeting	Friday 23 rd June 2023	WCBC / online meeting
AONB Partnership Meeting	Friday 20 th October 2023	To be arranged
AONB Joint Committee Meeting	Friday 17 th November 2023	FCC to host
AONB Champions & Community & Local Members Forum	Thursday 7 th March 2024	To be arranged
AONB Partnership Meeting	Friday 15 th March 2024	To be arranged
AONB Joint Committee Meeting	Friday 12 th April 2024	DCC to host