

Minutes of a meeting of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held in Council Chamber, Guildhall, Wrexham and by video conference on Friday, 23 June 2023 at 10.00 am.

AONB JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors Win Mullen-James (Virtual) (DCC), David Healey (FCC), Dave Hughes (FCC), Councillor Emrys Wynne (Denbighshire County Council) and Nigel Williams (WCBC)

ALSO PRESENT

Steve Gadd (Head of Finance and Property DCC), Ceri Lloyd (AONB SDF Officer), Paula O'Hanlon (Senior Finance Officer, DCC), Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer), David Shiel (AONB Area Manager), (Karen Weaver (AONB Co-ordinator), Clare Lord and Lisa Jones (DCC Legal), Helen Mrowiec (FCC), Emlyn Jones, Ffion Roberts (All DCC) Ash Pearce, Richard Sumner, (both NRW) Andy Worthington (Chair of AONB Partnership) Marie Russell WCBC (Committee Officer/zoom host)

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.

Apologies were received from Councillor Hugh Jones (WCBC)

There were no declarations of interest.

2. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

The draft minutes of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on 17 March 2023 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

A successful meeting of the AONB champions had taken place with a second meeting scheduled. The champions are nominated by town and community councils.

An update on national parks by the Natural Resources Wales team officer would be given at today's meeting following an action at the previous meeting.

3. DRAFT MINUTES OF AONB PARTNERSHIP HELD ON 19TH MAY 2023

The draft minutes of the AONB Partnership held on 19 May 2023 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

A number of updates from issues covered at this meeting would be provided today including natural park programme update and Our Picturesque Landscape partnership update.

4. SUMMARY OF OUR PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP 2020-23

DS gave a detailed verbal update on the delivery phase of the partnership. It was noted that the project, which had achieved a great deal was now coming to an end.

A number of issues were referred to, including:

- A summary of projects over the last 5 years that the partnership had been involved.
- Lost key sites were problematic and an approach to looking at woodland management whilst restoring key historic sites was being considered.
- Work on the Wenffrd Pocket Park landfill site had been a big part of project and plans had been developed to turn the site into a car park and local nature reserve.
- A Llangollen park run had taken place recently to promote this key location. This created an additional gateway for World Heritage Sites and had been hugely successful.
- Issues around congestion and access at the WHS had been addressed via a bus service and this had been successful.
- Restoration of gatehouse at Dinas Bran had been successful.
- Implementation of interpretation of the world heritage site as the full 11 miles and frame with consistency over key themes.
- Engagement with young people and communities, including hard to reach people through outreach work. The pandemic had taken place between the early phase and the delivery phase which impacted the amount of work that was able to take place. Officers were liaising with representatives from the Heritage Lottery Fund to see if the project could be extended by 12 months.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

5. PRESENTATION ON NORTHEAST WALES NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATION PROJECT

AP from NRW shared a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the Northeast Wales National Park Designation Project and responded to questions accordingly thereafter.

During the ensuing debate the following issues were referred to, in particular:-

- Concern regarding reaction from the farming community and the need to consult with farming unions. Suggestion that there would be fears on the effect of the project on the nature of farming, particularly on the Clwydian Range AONB. AP confirmed that the farming community, including farming unions would be a key sector of the

engagement process. Local Authorities would also be consulted in order to capture concern. It was noted that the project was still in its early stages.

- Concerns regarding the capacity to meet the potential increase in the number of visitors. AP confirmed that tourism would be included in the assessment. It was noted that evidence gathering was currently taking place and this would lead to recommendations being made and opportunities being identified. The National Park budget would be at least three times that of the existing AONB and could be focused on existing and future issues and concern, such as congestion. At this moment all resources must come from existing organisations.
- Query as to the criteria for defining the boundary of the National Park. AP advised that, whilst he was not a landscape specialist, the project would look to integrate management of natural resources and improve benefits but that natural beauty would remain a key area. It was noted that recreational benefits were key to the natural park.
- Planning issues and other concerns would be addressed as the project progressed.

RESOLVED – That the presentation and update be noted.

6. SUMMARY OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS 2022-23 (For Information Only)

HS introduced the report and responded to questions accordingly.

In response to a question it was stated that any concerns around noncompliance of planning conditions should be referred to planning compliance enforcement for investigation.

RESOLVED – That the information report be noted.

7. JOINT COMMITTEE ANNUAL RETURN FINANCIAL REPORT (Standing Item)

CL introduced the report and referred to the key points within it, responding to questions thereafter.

It was noted that a small underspend put the joint committee in a comfortable position.

All public service bodies had pressures, particularly around pay, but the overall position looked healthy.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and approved.

8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Standing Item)

HS introduced the FWP and referred to the main issues for consideration.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

9. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The next meeting would be held on **17 November 2023**.