

**Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held in the Lord Jones Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold and by video conference on Friday 17 November 2023 at 10.00 am.**

**ANOB JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:-**

Dave Hughes (FCC) (Chair), David Shiel (AONB Area Manager), Huw Rees (Countryside & Heritage Manager, DCC), Karen Weaver (AONB Co-ordination Officer), John Roberts (AONB Partnership and Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley), Andy Worthington (Chair of AONB Partnership), Ash Pearce (Natural Resources Wales), Ceri Lloyd (AONB Sustainable Development Officer), Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer), Lisa Jones (DCC Legal)

**ALSO PRESENT ONLINE:**

Councillor Win Mullen James (DCC), Emrys Wynne (DCC), Huw Jones (WCBC), Steve Gadd (Head of Finance and Property (DCC), Paula O'Hanlon (Senior Finance Officer, DCC), Emlyn Jones (DCC), Ffion Roberts (DCC), Tom Woodall (FCC) and Keith Davies (Principal Advisor on Designated Landscapes)

**OBSERVERS**

Cllr James Elson, Cllr Mike Bather and Cllr Bobby Feeley

The Chair firstly reported that Councillor Dave Healey would not be attending today because of a family bereavement and it was agreed to forward the committee's condolences and best wishes to him.

**1. INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Apologies were received from Councillor Dave Healey (FCC) Andrew Farrow (FCC) and Nigel Williams (WCBC)

There were no declarations received.

**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 the 23 June 2023 were submitted.

**Matters Arising**

Steve Gadd referred to agenda item 7 where it stated that CL introduced the report, it was in fact it was himself and Paula O'Hanlon who presented it.

The minutes were proposed and seconded and Huw Jones and Emrys Wynne.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

3. **DRAFT MINUTES FROM THE PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE STEERING GROUP**

HS informed the meeting that these minutes were not currently available but reported that Our Picturesque Landscape was included in these. He also referred to the very successful exhibition held at the Dory Gallery in Llangollen.

4. **DRAFT MINUTES OF AONB PARTNERSHIP HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2023**

The draft minutes from the AONB Partnership held on the 23 October 2023 were submitted.

EW referred to page 10 and the two spelling mistakes at item 2 Gwangollen and in third bullet point Llyfasi.

AW also referred to item 2 "Pentre Dwr Community Project" which should read the production of mountain grade fleece not grain.

HS referred to item 7 which mentioned the rebranding of AONB in England and Wales with the possibility that AONBs may in the future be referred to as "National Landscapes" with a new logo. He provided an update on the current position in Wales saying that for the time being the situation was being monitored.

AW provided an overview of the meeting specifically highlighting the "Day in the Life of a Farm" presentation, the importance of the establishment of the 6 Working Groups and the Presentation by Dwr Cymru. He also referred to the excellent presentation from National Resources Wales.

The minutes were moved and seconded by Councillor Dave Hughes and Andy Worthington.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes were received and noted

5. **PRESENTATION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND**

Ceri Lloyd (AONB Sustainable Development Officer) provided a presentation on the Sustainable Development Fund which included information on the following slides:-

- Overview

- 19 Projects, 7 Countryside Grant Schemes and 2 Panel meetings with information on the match funded provided
- Summary of Outputs achieved
  - 7 habitats improved
  - 44 local contractors/suppliers engaged
  - 656 trees planted,
  - 1260 people engaged
  - with 4014 volunteer hours
  - 197 public events
  - 28 Marketing and promotional activities
- Management Plan Review 2020 – 2025 which was split into 4 themes.
  - Nature Landscape and Heritage – information was provided on the Dark Skies Project and Landscape Enhancement Initiative
  - Changing Climate - information was provided on the Green Communities Project and Stori Hydro
  - Recreation Health & Wellbeing – information was provided on the Llangollen Park Run and Prestatyn Walking Festivals and an update on the Nature for Health Project
  - the Rural Economy – information was provided on Food & Drink and Tourism projects.

The Chair thanked Ceri for the presentation saying that it was very impressive to see what had been achieved with such a small amount of money.

AW congratulated the team saying the presentation outlined the achievements, outputs of the projects and how they linked with the Management Plan

EW Also congratulated the team especially with regard to the Llangollen Park Run and Prestatyn Walking Festivals. These were not large projects but the value for money and the targeted benefits they provided to so many people was incredible.

## 6. **UPDATE ON NORTHEAST WALES NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATION PROJECT**

Ash Pierce from National Resources Wales provided a presentation which included information on the following points :-

- Overview – Timeline
- The Area of Search

- Communication and Engagement
- Recent Engagements and forthcoming Events
- Initial positivity / negatively
- Areas of Interest
- Need for clarity on the benefits of National Park Designation
- Common themes

The Chair commented that as the committee did not have delegated powers to speak on this that any questions should be on an individual basis.

In response to a question from AW on the approach of Welsh Government (WG), AP clarified that NRW had to remain impartial with WG viewed as not unduly influencing the process or NRW. Once the consultation stage was reached then everyone would then be able to comment with NRW presenting their proposal stating why they thought it was correct. WG would then decide if the evidence was robust, if they agreed with it and proceed on that basis. Other partners would have a more advocative role throughout the process.

AW asked if the slides could be circulated to the board. AP agreed to share these.

JR wondered if there was feedback for national parks to take a more active role in terms of biodiversity, nature recovery and climate change. Also from the discussions held by the Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley he asked if changes to the area of search for the national park would be considered.

In response AP referred to the role of national parks and felt that there was an appetite to have more of an affect. An assessment was being undertaken to identify different ways of working with regard to the integrated sustainable management processes. This was however outside of his team's remit to look beyond the establishment. With regard to widening the aerial search he said that evidence would need to be submitted which would be considered once all responses had been submitted

Keith Davies referred to the Welsh Government's Biodiversity Deep Dive which had submitted a recommendation around the process of designating a new national park. It would need to demonstrate how it embedded and measured nature recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation which would be a principal priority of any new national park which was established.

EW referred to the problems experienced with too many people visiting sites such as Eryri, Moel Fammau and the Horseshoe Pass following covid. AP commented in this situation there would need to be a base of evidence presented establishing whether a national park designation would improve, exacerbate or alleviate those issues. There was a perception that as these issues already existed within AONB that this would make things worse but there needed to be an understanding on what was driving that level of visitors.

EW also had concerns around regard to honeypot tourism which he felt had implications for planning applications within local authorities. AP reported that the next stage of the process would look at the different options on how the park would be constituted and not following the default setting of other parks. It was possible that planning applications would be delegated back to local authorities to minimise any negative impact.

KD referred to the formal function of any new authority saying that there would be discussions held around some of the options. One option for a new national park with planning functions could be that the management function be delegated to the constituent authorities. These would be discussed at the next stage of the project.

HS commented that the presentation explained the early engagement process carried out with Natural Resources Wales. He read out information from the Eryri plan including the number of developments planned with the stipulation that people had lived and worked in the area for 5 years. The other comment was that planning took a long time in national parks; it was actually one day longer. He then referred to the two documents which were out for consultation from Natural Resources Wales saying that it was not possible to respond from the joint committee. It would however be possible for members to respond as individuals to the questionnaire with the closing date of 27<sup>th</sup> November.

## 7. **JOINT COMMITTEE ANNUAL RETURN FINANCIAL REPORT**

SG confirmed that this was the in-year monitoring financial position and referred to the key points within it. The report was showing an overspend of £17k which was actually budgeted for and page 58 provided information on the contribution from reserve which was the overspend and the report highlighted that there was a figure of £52k left in the general reserve. The risks with regard to Local Authorities and Welsh Government funding were explained. Referring to the Annual Return it was reported that Audit Wales had confirmed that they were planning to commence work on the Annual Return in December, finalising it in January.

### **RESOLVED**

Members acknowledged that they had received the update.

## 8. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

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

## 9. **FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on the 12 April 2024.

Meeting concluded at 11.20 am.