

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, 21 June 2024 at 10.00 am.

AONB JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors David Healey (FCC), Dave Hughes (FCC), Emrys Wynne (DCC), and Councillor Hugh Jones (WCBC).

ALSO PRESENT

Steve Gadd (Head of Finance and Property DCC), Paula O'Hanlon (Senior Finance Officer, DCC), Howard Sutcliffe (AONB Officer), David Shiel (AONB Area Manager), Karen Weaver (AONB Co-ordinator), Clare Lord (Solicitor/Places Team Leader), Helen Mrowiec, Andy Worthington, Mike Pather, David Shiel, Ian Hughes, Rhun Jones, Elinor Cartwright, Mike Skuse and Marie Russell (Committee Officer WCBC/zoom host) Huw Rees (DCC)

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 Nigel Williams (WCBC) and Ash Pearce. Councillor Alan James (DCC)

There were no declarations of interest.

2. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

The draft minutes of the previous meeting of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee held on 12 April 2024 were submitted.

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

Matters Arising

Clare Lord provided a verbal update in relation to the legal agreement which had been sent to Flintshire and Wrexham for comment. This document had been approved and now required joint signing.

3. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PICTURESQUE LANDSCAPE STEERING GROUP HELD ON 30 APRIL 2024

The draft minutes of the AONB Partnership held on 30 April were submitted.

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

4. VARIATION IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

AGREED – That Item 6 - Joint Committee Annual Return report - be brought forward and taken at this time.

5. JOINT COMMITTEE ANNUAL OUTTURN AND ACCOUNTS (STANDING ITEM)

Steve Gadd introduced the report and advised that Members were asked to note the financial outturn for 2023/24 (Appendix 1) and the Reserve Balances as of 31st March 2024 (Appendix 4).

Members were also asked to formally approve the 2024/25 draft budget (appendix 2) and review and sign the Annual Return for 2023/24 (Appendix 3). 4.

In introducing his report Steve referred in particular to the summary of the AONB's revenue outturn for 2023/24 (as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report). He stated that the final outturn position showed an overall overspend of £26,439 which had been funded from the revenue Reserve.

AGREED – That the report be noted.

6. PRESENTATION CURLEW CONNECTIONS PROJECT

Rhun Jones gave a detailed presentation which provided information under the following headings.

- Curlew were woven through out history, art and culture
- What do we know about the curlew?
- They live for 30 years
- Breeding distribution and how previous years compared to recent data
- Changes % in numbers of breeding curlew across the UK and Ireland
- Reasons for losing curlew population, changes in Agricultural practices and loss of habitat
- ~~High~~-Due to low numbers of curlew predators (fox and crow) are considered a factor in trying to sustain the tiny population of them.
- The UK has lost nearly half its breeding curlew in twenty years
- The first 10 weeks when curlews were chicks is when they are most vulnerable
- Need to find a solution to increase and maintain the population sustainably.
- Welcome to the Curlew Wales website
- Recovery plan is available on the website
- Curlew Celebration Event was held in April 2024.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the interesting and informative presentation and responded to questions accordingly thereafter.

AGREED – That the presentation be noted.

7. UPDATE ON NORTHEAST WALES NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATION PROJECT

Howard Sutcliffe gave an update on behalf of Ash Pearce who had submitted his apologies. He advised that the project had been through the engagement process and draft ideas were currently being considered i.e. reviewing boundaries. Conclusions were being drawn and full consultation would take place in Autumn 2024.

AGREED – That the update be noted.

8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Standing Item)

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

The current pressures that LG were currently facing were referred to. It was hoped that WG would be considering loosening of the revenue scheme and thus allowing greater access towards core funding for staff.

It was noted that most items within the programme were on track and there were a number of new projects.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

9. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The next meeting would be held on 15 November 2024.

The signing of the memorandum of understanding by Ian Bancroft, Chief Executive WCBC took place at the conclusion of the meeting.