

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee held
at The Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford. on Monday,
6th November, 2017 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor P. Cutter (Chair) (Herefordshire Council)

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: M. Lane and A. Webb

Gloucestershire County Council

County Councillors: T. Hale and P. Molyneux

Herefordshire Council

Councillors J. Hardwick and E.J. Swinglehurst

Forest of Dean District Council

Councillors: G. Davies and B. Hogan

Town / Parish Community Councils with voting powers

Herefordshire Association of Local Councils – Mr. R. Gething
One Voice Wales – Councillor G.M. Powell

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire - Mr. G. Peterken
Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas
Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire – Mr B. Nash

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – Mr. C. Barron
Recreation Sector – Mr. A. Lee
Local Tourism Sector – Mr. D. Broadbent

Technical Advice Officers

Wye Valley AONB Manager – Mr. A. Blake
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis
Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams
Gloucestershire County Council – Mr. R. Niblett

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APOLOGIES:

M. Price, J. Bisset, D. Griffiths and S. Dereham

1. Simon Dereham

The Chair informed the Committee that today's meeting would have been Simon Dereham's final meeting as a member of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee. However, he had been unable to attend due to illness.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Simon for the excellent work that he had undertaken as a long standing member of this Committee and in the wider community.

The Chair and the AONB Manager will meet with Simon in due course to present him with a gift, on behalf of the Committee.

2. Declarations of Interest

The following Councillors declared interests as Planning Committee Members of their respective authorities in matters that might arise relating to development control issues:

Councillor P. Cutter
Councillor E.J. Swinglehurst
Councillor J. Hardwick

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting dated 3rd July 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present.

5. Local Authority contributions and Memorandum of Understanding 2018-2021

We received a report outlining requests for contributions from the four constituent local authorities to the budget for the Wye Valley AONB Partnership for 2018/2019, 2019/20 and 2020/21 to be included in the AONB Memorandum of Understanding between the four local authorities for this period.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The AONB Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is intended to give medium term security and commitment to the AONB Partnership.
- The current MoU ends in March 2018 and the next version is proposed to run until 2021.

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- Prior to the MoU the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) annually recommended to the constituent local authorities the contribution required for the continued effective operation, management and governance of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.
- Gloucestershire County Council has already confirmed its financial contributions for the Wye Valley AONB until 2020/21. Other funding partners are requested to make similar three year commitments where possible.
- The contributions from the local authorities form the foundation to the budget managed by the AONB Unit.
- DEFRA and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are not signatories to the MoU but are party to the negotiations and their funding offer letters are appended to the MoU. The DEFRA grant offer currently extends until 2020. NRW will issue a new offer in 2018.
- For every £1 of Local Authority contribution, the AONB Unit has levered in over £8 on average in recent years.

We resolved that the Joint Advisory Committee:

- (i) requests from the constituent local authorities the agreed financial contributions for the Wye Valley AONB for 2018/2019, 2019/20 and 2020/21;
- (ii) encourages the constituent local authorities to renew the AONB Memorandum of Understanding for 2018 – 2021.

6. Wye Valley River Festival 2018

We received a report which outlined the programme for the Wye Valley River Festival 2018.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Wye Valley River Festival presents high quality, original art works in the landscape with an inspiring, collaborative and vibrant programme of unique, provocative and spectacular events. The Festival is led by the Wye Valley AONB Unit and contracted independent arts practitioners.
- Sufficient funding for the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 to proceed has been secured from Arts Council England, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and several other sources.
- Additional funding applications are being submitted along with campaigns on sponsorship, advertising and sales planned for the remaining parts of the programme.

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- The programme of events between 5th and 19th May 2018 is being finalised and is based on the theme of 'Woods and Trees'.
- The future of the biennial Wye Valley River Festival is also being considered in the context of the three Festivals in 2014, 2016 and 2018.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Unit is working with a number of town, community and parish councils.
- Town, community and parish councils were in the process of setting their precepts for 2018/19. It was suggested that the AONB unit contacts them shortly with a view to establishing funding contributions towards the Wye Valley River Festival 2018.
- A programme of workshops are being planned to encourage the local communities and schools to get involved with the Wye Valley River Festival 2018.

We welcomed the funding to date for the Wye Valley River Festival 2018 and the evolving programme.

7. Future Landscapes Wales and Governance Review

We received a report regarding the opportunity to peer review the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Joint Advisory Committee agreed at the last meeting to adopt the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*.
- Swansea City Council, the lead authority for Gower AONB Partnership, is also interested in adopting the 'Principles of Good Governance'.
- A joint initiative between the Wye Valley and Gower AONB Partnerships over the adoption of the 'Principles of Good Governance' would demonstrate good collaboration in line with Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) programme and introduce some peer-review scrutiny to the process.
- The Review of Designated Landscapes (AONBs and National Parks) in Wales has continued with the Welsh Government consultation *Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*, which closed on 30th September 2017.

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- Lesley Griffiths, Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, stated that “The recent review has provided an opportunity to reaffirm the importance to Wales of our designated landscapes.”
- The AONB Manager continues to contribute to The Future Landscapes Wales (FLW) Working Group, chaired by Lord Elis-Thomas, which is taking forward the priorities identified in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales*.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- A task and finish group will be established consisting of two or three members from the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee and the Gower AONB Partnership. Two or three meetings will be required whereby the AONB Managers will report back the findings and any recommendations from the task and finish group meetings to their respective Committees, in due course.
- Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) Members expressing an interest in joining the task and finish group were asked to contact the AONB Manager.
- The joint working aspect will benefit both AONBs. The task and finish group will consider the principles of good governance in relation to both AONB partnerships. Joint working will create good scrutiny of the peer review.
- A member of the JAC informed the Committee that the local authority Chief Executives are the chief executive officers responsible for the AONBs. However, it was considered that these executives were not, but should be, liaising with each other in relation to taking forward the development of AONBs, both locally within the AONB and at a national level.
- A member of the JAC suggested that a third AONB should be involved in the process to provide a suitable level of peer review. It was suggested the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB could be invited to provide this.

We resolved that the Joint Advisory Committee:

- (i) welcomes the opportunity to peer review with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership the ‘Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes’, as outlined in the *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* report;
- (ii) investigates with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to undertake the ‘Good Governance Review’.

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8. Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

We received a report regarding the allocations of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for 2017/18 and 2018/19, subject to available funds.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The 2017/18 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) from Welsh Government is £55,000.
- The SDF Assessment Panel had allocated £53,977.46 for 2017/18 to date.
- The SDF Assessment Panel had provisionally allocated £36,000 for 2018/19 subject to funds being made available from Welsh Government.
- The Joint Advisory Committee had previously endorsed the principle of allocating any remaining SDF at end of year to specific AONB projects that met the SDF criteria.

We resolved to endorse the recent allocations of the SDF for 2017/18 and for 2018/19 subject to funds being available.

9. AONB Partnership Study Tour feedback

We received a report regarding the success of the AONB Partnership Annual Study Tour.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- A total of 29 people attended the annual AONB Partnership Tour.
- There was a good spread of representation from throughout the AONB even though the Tour was focused predominantly on the south Herefordshire part of the AONB.
- Feedback from attendees of the Tour has been extremely positive.
- There is still the ambition for a joint initiative with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, probably sometime in 2018.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

10. NAAONB update

We received a report outlining the activity through the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

In doing so, the following information was noted:

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- The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Chairman's Conference and Annual General Meeting is being held on 23rd November 2017 and will be attended by the AONB Manager.
- The NAAONB gave Oral Evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act.
- Outstanding Week was held on 6th - 24th September 2017 with over 90 events held nationally.
- A joint publication and declaration has been signed with Europe's Nature Parks entitled 'Living Landscapes'.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

11. AONB / Partner progress

We received a report regarding the activity of the AONB and partners relating to:

- Lydbrook Bridge.
- mindSCAPE Conference.
- Youth Rangers.
- Venison Processing and Marketing Feasibility Study.
- Wales National Parks (NPs) Seminar and hosting the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) event / visit 2018.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Lydbrook Bridge - The AONB Manager informed the Committee that a meeting was to be held with Gloucestershire County Council officers with a view to discussing funding for the restoration of pedestrian access over Lydbrook Bridge. A project enquiry form had been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which was an outline expression of interest. However, it was noted that there is considerable competition for HLF grants and at present, the success rate is running at around 27%.

Concern was expressed that a contingency plan would need to be considered should the HLF funding request not be successful. It was noted that Gloucestershire County Council was in the process of arranging meetings with a view to moving forward on this matter.

The restoration costs for the footbridge equated to £1,246,650. A view was expressed that these costs were excessive and needed to be reviewed.

The AONB Manager stated that he would keep the Joint Advisory Committee updated in respect of developments with regard to this matter.

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- The mindSCAPE Conference held on 5th October 2017 had been a successful event promoting the achievements to date in the final year of the current 4 year project funding from Big Lottery. The aim was to consolidate mindSCAPE activity in Gloucestershire and investigate ways to expand activity into Monmouthshire and Herefordshire.
- The next cohort of Wye Valley AONB Youth Rangers had begun, consisting of 20 new young people joining the 2 year programme.
- The Venison Processing and Marketing Feasibility Study is nearing completion and a final report should be available by the end of 2017.
- The AONB Manager and Cllr Mrs A Webb had attended the National Parks Wales Seminar on 3rd and 4th October 2017. The AONB Manager and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority staff and members had reiterated the ambition for a shared event, recognising that this is likely to be held in the first half of 2018.
- It was noted that the AONB unit and Monmouthshire County Council had submitted comments to Welsh Government regarding the document on Designated Landscapes.
- In response to a question raised regarding an update about the Pine Marten Study, the AONB Manager would investigate whether any progress had been made and report back to the Joint Advisory Committee.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

12. Next Meeting

Future meetings of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee will be held at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Forest of Dean District Council Offices, Coleford on the following dates:

5th March 2018

2nd July 2018

5th November 2018

4th March 2019

The meeting ended at 3.11 pm.