

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,
2nd July, 2018 at 2.00 pm**

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

Elected Members (with voting powers)

Monmouthshire County Council

County Councillors: D. Dovey and M. Lane

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

GAPTC – Mr. C. Evers

HALC – Mr. R. Gething

Co-opted Members (with voting powers)

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire – Mr. A. Thomas

Co-opted Members (without voting powers)

Wye Valley Society – Mr. C. Barron

Recreation Sector – Mr. A. Lee

River Wye Preservation Trust – Mr. R. Hesketh

National Farmers Union Wales – Mr. D. Price

Technical Advice Officers

Wye Valley AONB Manager – Mr. A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. M. Lewis

Monmouthshire County Council – Mr. R. Williams

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor A. Webb, Councillor H. Molyneux, Mr. M. Price,
Councillor G. Powell and Mr. R. Niblett.

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1. Election of Chair

We elected Councillor P. Cutter as Chair.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

We appointed County Councillor A. Webb as Vice-Chair.

3. Introduction and New Members

The Committee welcomed Mr. R. Hesketh (River Wye Preservation Trust) and Mr. C. Evers (Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils) to the meeting.

4. Declarations of Interest.

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

Councillor P. Cutter
Councillor J. Hardwick
Councillor B. Hogan

5. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee meeting dated 5th March 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

6. Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present.

7. AONB Management Plan Review

We received a report outlining the programme for the preparation and publication of the AONB Management Plan 2020-2025.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The current Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2015-2020) needs to be reviewed, under the CROW Act Section 89, by the end of 2020.
- The Wye Valley AONB Memorandum of Understanding 2018-2021, signed by the four local authorities, delegates the Management Plan review to the AONB Partnership.
- In due course, the local authorities and the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) will need to decide the extent of Management Plan review required.

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- Defra, Natural England and the National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) have produced outline guidance on the next round of AONB Management Plan reviews. The Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are currently reviewing their own guidance.

We resolved that the Joint Advisory Committee:

- (i) welcomes the delegation by the four local authorities to the AONB Partnership for the preparation and production of the AONB Management Plan by the AONB Unit.
- (ii) endorses the programme for the review of the AONB Management Plan.

8. AONB Good Governance Review - Task Group outcomes and recommendations

We received a report regarding the outcomes of the recent Task Group with Swansea City Council and Gower AONB Partnership on the review of the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes'.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Joint Advisory Committee agreed to review the 'Principles of Good Governance for Designated Landscapes' as outlined in *Future Landscapes: Delivering for Wales* through a joint Task Group with Gower AONB Partnership.
- The Task Group met on Tuesday 24th April 2018 at the Wye Valley AONB Office and concluded a number of aspects of 'what we do well' and 'what we could do better'.
- The outcomes of the Task Group were noted and 20 recommendations had been proposed that address the findings of 'what we could do better'.
- There are no significant or radical changes proposed to governance arrangements but there are implications for the future capacity of the AONB Unit to deliver all the recommendations beyond this financial year.

Having considered the report, the following points were noted:

- Current budget projections indicated that the AONB Unit will be unable to finance an information officer post beyond this financial year. However, it is hoped that resources will be found to keep this post.
- In response to a question raised, it was noted that the AONB unit has been feeding into the National Review regarding how to get senior officers within local authorities to be aware of the AONB and the authorities' responsibility for their respective areas of the AONB.

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- Local Authorities could be provided with a briefing paper via the AONB Manager following each Joint Advisory Committee meeting with a view to improving communication with local authorities.
- The AONB Unit and the Joint Advisory Committee has, for a number of years, been working to raise the profile of the AONB via important partnerships, conferences and initiatives such as the River Festival. However, there is a need to continue to move forward with regard to this matter.

We welcomed the outcomes of the Task Group meeting of 24th April 2018 and:

- welcomed the identification of 'what we do well'.
- Accepted the 20 recommendations that build on 'what we could do better'.

9. Review of Designated Landscapes

We received a report regarding the on-going Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales and the forthcoming Review of Designated Landscapes in England.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Welsh Government Minister, Hannah Blythyn AM, wrote to the AONB lead officers in Wales seeking further input into the Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales.
- The Welsh AONB lead officers are meeting over the summer with Natural Resources Wales, the National Association for AONBs and the Welsh National Parks to collate a response to the Minister's request.
- In January 2018, the Westminster Government published its '25 Year Plan for the Environment', establishing an approach to protect habitats and landscapes in England including undertaking a review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).
- Environment Secretary Michael Gove MP launched the Review of Designated Landscapes (National Parks and AONBs) in late May 2018 to be led by writer and journalist Julian Glover.
- The Review panel is scheduled to report back to Government during 2019.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The AONB Manager will report back to the Joint Advisory Committee on the various stages of the review.
- Ways to feed into the review will be investigated.

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- The AONB Manager has been invited to speak at the National Conference.
- If AONB's gain similar status to National Parks, concern was expressed regarding the potential loss of local authority control over AONB planning matters. However, the AONB Manager informed the Committee that there are no plans for AONBs to take on planning functions.
- AONBs are generally small, agile units that are very good at delivering services.

We welcomed the continued positive attention on AONBs and to contribute as appropriate to the on-going Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales and the forthcoming Review of Designated Landscapes in England.

10. Annual Report 2017/18

We received the annual reports for 2017/18 on the achievements of the Wye Valley AONB Unit and the contracted Planning consultants for the AONB Unit.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- High standards of achievement were maintained by the AONB Unit and staffing issues were resolved.
- The AONB Unit has levered in nearly £8 for every £1 of local authority contribution during 2017/18.
- Worcestershire County Council Planning Department continued to provide strategic planning advice to the AONB Unit on development issues, preparing appropriate responses where necessary.
- The AONB Unit, on behalf of the AONB Partnership, has made fewer comments on planning applications but has been more involved in pre-application enquiries and Neighbourhood Development Plans during the year.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question regarding consultation, it was noted that the AONB unit is consulted by local planning authorities with regard to planning applications located within the AONB.
- The AONB unit also scrutinises weekly planning application lists to identify planning applications within the AONB for assessment of significant detrimental impact.
- In recent years, it was noted that through various appeals and case law, developers are submitting better planning applications to local authorities.

We welcomed the Annual Reports of AONB achievements for 2017/18.

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11. Wye Valley River Festival 2018 Initial Feedback

We received a report and presentation regarding the achievements and the initial evaluation of the third Wye Valley River Festival.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The third Wye Valley River Festival journeyed between Hereford and Chepstow during 5th and 20th May 2018, celebrating nature, culture, landscape and life along the River Wye, and the woods and trees of the Wye Valley.
- There were about 30,000 visits or acts of engagement in 30 Wye Valley River Festival events at 25 different venues and only one outdoor event had received any rain.
- The Welsh Government Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas, opened the Museum of the Moon at Cadw's Tintern Abbey.
- This third Festival was organised by the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit and the professional Festival Management team with an overall budget of nearly £200,000 working with arts professionals in collaboration with local communities and conservationists.
- A wide variety of organisations and communities supported the Festival including many hours of volunteer time and sizable financial contributions from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council England, Forestry Commission and Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership, Shire Hall Monmouth, Cadw, Environment Agency and a significant range of smaller donations and in-kind contributions.
- A great many people dedicated a huge amount of time and energy to making the Wye Valley River Festival such a broad, innovative and enjoyable series of events.
- A full evaluation of the Festival is being undertaken to appraise lessons learned, as well as a review of the three Festivals held in line with the original business plan.
- Once the evaluation is complete future prospects for any further Wye Valley River Festivals will need to be determined.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- On behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee, the Chair thanked the Wye Valley AONB Manager and his team for organising and facilitating this event and for the hard work that was required in order for the event to take place.
- Thanks were also given to those groups and organisations that supported the River Festival.

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We welcomed the success of the Wye Valley River Festival 2018.

12. AONB Partnership Study Tour 2018

We received a report regarding the date and outline programme for the Annual AONB Partnership Study Tour.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- This year, the Wye Valley AONB Partnership Tour will be held on Friday 21st September.
- The programme is still being finalised but will focus predominantly on projects and management issues in the northern part of the AONB in Herefordshire.
- Initial invitations for expressions of interest to attend will be dispatched shortly.
- The Tour falls within 'Outstanding Week' 15th – 23rd September 2018, which is the fourth year of this week promoting and celebrating AONBs.

We resolved to:

- (i) note the date of Friday 21st September 2018 for the Study Tour.
- (ii) encourage a good attendance on the Tour.

13. Project Grant Applications

We received a report regarding the latest situation in respect of the three grant applications submitted on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has approved funding for a Natural Flood Management and Green Infrastructure project covering four Wye tributaries in the Monmouthshire part of the AONB. A Project Officer will be associated to this, seconded from Monmouthshire County Council.
- Gloucestershire County Council submitted a Heritage Grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of Lydbrook Black Bridge totalling £1.5million.
- The Wye and Usk Foundation submitted an application for the Water Environment Grant, entitled Restoring Our Amazing River (ROAR) which includes most of the English part of the AONB.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

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14. NAAONB Update: Conference 24th - 26th July 2018

We received a report regarding the recent work of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) including the forthcoming Landscapes for Life Conference and Bowland Award.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) has been meeting with DEFRA to discuss the role AONBs play in delivering the DEFRA agenda.
- The theme and dates for the national AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference is "Shaping the Long View" on 24th - 26th July 2018 in Canterbury.
- Two representatives from the AONB Partnership are attending the AONB Landscapes for Life Conference and the Wye Valley River Festival is submitted for the Bowland Award.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

15. AONB / Partner Progress

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

- Offa's Dyke Collaboratory – Events had been held earlier in the year with more events scheduled for September 2018 to be held in the Drill Hall, Chepstow. Archaeological investigations at Lancaut are being concluded.
- Farming Awards – Eight farmers entered and have been shortlisted to four. The awards ceremony will be held at the Monmouthshire Show on 7th July 2018.
- mindSCAPE – Big Lottery Funding has concluded. The next phase will incorporate funding via Foresters' Forest Landscape Partnership. A handbook of activities has been produced for people to use in providing support for dementia sufferers.
- Youth Rangers – It has been necessary to re-evaluate how to work with the current cohort as attendance has been poor.
- Welsh Government Access Grant – Additional Funding from Welsh Government has been received for access enhancement.
- The Ash Project – The AONB Unit had contributed to a book that has been written regarding Ash Trees due to be published shortly.
- Undergrounding – Work continues with Western Power Distribution.

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We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

16. Next Meetings

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:

Monday 5th November 2018

Monday 4th March 2019.

The meeting ended at 3.37 pm.