

## **MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of Wye Valley AONB held  
at The Shire Hall, Monmouth on Monday, 7th March, 2016 at 2.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillor P. Cutter (Chairman) (Herefordshire Council)

### **Elected Members (with voting powers)**

#### **Monmouthshire County Council**

County Councillors: D. Dovey, E. Hacket Pain, and A. Webb

#### **Herefordshire Council**

Councillors: J. Hardwick and E.J. Swinglehurst

#### **Forest of Dean**

Councillor G. Davies

### **Co-opted Members (with voting powers)**

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Gloucestershire: Dr. G. Peterken

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire: B. Nash

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire: A. Thomas

One Voice Wales - Councillor T. Phillips

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### **Co-opted Members (without voting powers)**

Wye Valley Society – C. Barron

Recreation Sector – A. Lee

Local Tourism Sector – D. Broadbent

### **Technical Advice Officers**

Wye Valley AONB Officer – A. Blake

Monmouthshire County Council – M. Lewis

Gloucestershire County Council – R. Niblett

Monmouthshire County Council – R. Williams

### **APOLOGIES:**

County Councillor D. Blakebrough, Councillor P. McMahon, Councillor P. Molyneux, Councillor B. Durkin, Councillor B. Hogan, S.W.B. Dereham, M. Price, D. Price, H. Stace, D. Griffiths, H. McDowell and H. Molyneux

#### **1. Declarations of Interest.**

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

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Councillor P. Cutter  
Councillor J. Hardwick  
Councillor E.J. Swinglehurst  
County Councillor A. Webb  
County Councillor D. Dovey  
Councillor G. Davies

### **2. Public Question Time.**

No questions were raised by members of the public.

### **3. Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman. In doing so, it was noted that the following amendment should be made:

Page 1 of the minutes:

Voluntary Conservation Sector in Monmouthshire: Mr. A. Thomas  
Voluntary Conservation Sector in Herefordshire: Mr. B. Nash

### **4. Future Landscape Wales Programme - Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales.**

We received a report in which the Committee were informed of the progress being made in respect of the Future Landscape Wales programme addressing the review of Designated Landscapes in Wales.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The Marsden Report 'National Landscapes: Realising their Potential - The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales' Final Report was published in October 2015 and had been outlined at the previous meeting.
- The Minister for Natural Resources subsequently established the Future Landscapes Wales programme to take forward the recommendations in the Marsden Report.
- The programme entails four Project Groups that are preparing evidence for a Working Group chaired by Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas AM that will initially report back to the Minister in April 2016.
- Andrew Blake, AONB Officer, and Matthew Lewis, chair of the Technical Officers Working Party (TOWP) and Monmouthshire's Green Infrastructure and Countryside Manager, are both involved in the Project Groups, alongside other officers and members from across the Welsh AONBs, National Parks and other relevant organisations.

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- There is wide political interest in the outcome of the Future Landscapes Wales programme but it is not known how the next government will want to take forward the programme following the Welsh Assembly elections in May 2016.
- The process raises the expectations of what AONBs could and should deliver and whatever occurs post-election it is hoped that this raised profile will be maintained.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- That the Chief Executives of the local authorities within the Wye Valley AONB do not meet to discuss the issues relating to the Wye Valley. However, this does happen between local authorities within the national parks.
- It was noted that there were no representatives with disabilities serving on the Project Groups. This matter would be raised.

We resolved to endorse the involvement of lead officers in the Future Landscapes Wales programme and the opportunities to shape the future of Designated Landscapes in Wales.

#### **5. AONB Unit 2016/17 Work Programme.**

We received a report regarding the proposed business plan for the AONB Unit during the forthcoming financial year.

In doing so, the following information was noted:

- The proposed business plan is focused on progressing the new AONB Management Plan, successful delivery of the Wye Valley River Festival 2016 and continuing existing activities while developing new initiatives and funding opportunities.
- In the Government's Autumn Statement, George Osborne announced that "Funding for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will [also] be protected". Defra subsequently made a four year grant offer to all AONBs in England.
- The budgets in the Work Programme have been approved by Defra, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the AONB Steering Group.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question raised by a Committee Member regarding the importance of the Town Bridge at Chepstow, it was noted that the Wye Valley River Festival dates did not coincide with the bicentenary celebrations, plans of which were awaited from Chepstow Town Council.

We resolved to endorse the AONB Unit Work programme 2016/17.

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#### **6. Sustainable Development Fund Update.**

We received a report regarding the allocations of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) for 2015/16.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The allocation of the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) of £60,000 in Wales in 2015/16 has been fully identified.
- The Joint Advisory Committee had previously endorsed the principle of allocating remaining SDF at end of year to specific projects such as the Wye Valley River Festival.
- The Welsh Government has not yet advised what the SDF allocation for 2016/17 will be but a reduction is expected, probably between 5 - 10%, amounting to an SDF allocation in the region of £55,000.
- The SDF Assessment Panel has provisionally approved £26,445 of SDF grants towards projects in 2016/17.
- The remaining £6,000 SDF funding unallocated would be directed towards the Wye Valley River Festival 2016.

Having received the report, we resolved to endorse the allocations of the SDF for 2015/16, including allocation of the remaining funds to the Wye Valley River Festival.

#### **7. Wye Valley River Festival 2016.**

We received details of the programme for the Wye Valley River Festival 2016.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- Sufficient funding for the Wye Valley River Festival to proceed has been secured from Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council England, the AONB Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) and many other sources.
- A programme of events between 29<sup>th</sup> April & 15<sup>th</sup> May 2016 is being finalised.
- After the Festival fortnight a full evaluation of the Festival will be undertaken to appraise whether to hold a third Wye Valley River Festival in 2018.
- Post cards relating to the Wye Valley River Festival 2016 were available for Committee Members.
- A list of sponsors was available within the report. The total budget equated to in the region of £200,000.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

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#### **8. National Association for AONB's.**

We received an update report on recent and proposed work of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- Andrew Blake, AONB Officer, represented the Joint Advisory Committee in November 2015 at the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) Annual General Meeting and the National Parks & AONB Chairmen's Conference.
- Rory Stewart, Defra Under Secretary of State, told the National Parks & AONB Chairmen's Conference that "Protected Landscapes are at the heart of what Defra tries to do". The Government subsequently protected funding for England's National Parks and AONBs.
- The theme and dates for the next national AONB 'Landscapes for Life' Conference is 'natural beauty in relationship to the health and wellbeing of society' on 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016 at Lilleshall National Sports & Conferencing Centre, Newport, Shropshire.
- One of the Conference Field Trips on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016 may possibly be to the Wye Valley (subject to timings and logistics).
- Outstanding Week 2016 is scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> September 2016.
- The National Trust has published a report 'AONBs and Development' appraising the planning system in relation to AONBs, in liaison with the NAAONB.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

#### **9. Partner and AONB Unit progress reports and updates.**

We were provided with details of the activity of the AONB Unit and other partners in respect of the following initiatives:

- AONB Management Plan.
- Visits to Wye Valley AONB.
- LEMUR+ placements.
- Mindscape.
- Wales Year of Adventure promotions.
- Undergrounding electricity cables.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The Committee was pleased that schemes with a value of £600,000 had undergrounded 7.6km of electricity cables and further schemes were being considered within the Wye Valley AONB by Western Power.

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- It was noted that Defra and the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty were working with National Grid with a view to progressing undergrounding and mitigation schemes of high voltage power cables on large pylons.
- There was a need to influence Government regulators to encourage British Telecom to take forward its undergrounding schemes.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

#### **10. Dates of Joint Advisory Council Meetings for 2016**

We resolved that the dates and venues for meetings in 2016 will be as follows:

- 2.00pm Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July - Forest of Dean Council Chamber, Coleford.
- 2.00pm Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November - Forest of Dean Council Chamber, Coleford.

**The meeting ended at 3.05pm.**