

**Minutes of the Northern Snowdonia Local Access Forum Meeting
held on Monday 2nd March 2020
at 5.45p.m YHA Pen Pass**

Present - Members:

Mr Edwin Noble	Mr Richard Williams
Mr Edgar Williams	Mrs Hilary Davies
Mr Arthur Davies	Mr Tom Hutton
Mr John Gladston	Cllr Jason Parry
Dennis McAteer	Mr Robin Parry
Ms Katy Haines	Mr Dafydd Gwyndaf
Mr David Firth	

Officers / Speakers:

Peter Rutherford (SNPA)	Rhian P Williams (SNPA)
Tony Blackburn(Mountain Bothies Association)	
Dani Robertson (Dark Skies Project SNPA/partnership)	

1. **Apologies:**

Mr Eryl P Roberts	Mr R. J. Collister
Molly Lovatt (NRW)	

EN thanked everyone for their attendance this evening and welcomed the various guests and speakers.

2. **Previous Minutes**

Approved

3. **Matters Arising**

i) **Snowdon Pillar update**

PR mentioned that the pillars required re painting and that this was being arranged with the original contractor. However, this is not possible until the train starts in May and dry weather is required. They were considering using a lights colour paint to stand out slightly more from the grey colour of the stone. He stressed that this was important to get done.

There was also a site visit planned (by members) to visit Bwlch Y Moch and to consider other potential remedial measures at this important intersection. As soon as the weather allowed this would be done.

RW asked what evidence there was that difficulties were occurring. Whilst he appreciated that people following others was an issue thinking they were headed for the Snowdon Summit and then found themselves in difficulties.

JG added that the Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team (MRT) had asked that we look at this once again after a review of their rescue `statistics.

JG reported that that team had taken people off Crib Coch once again in recent days – typically this frequently happens when people simply follow others and then find themselves in that location unintentionally. What is required is that people need to make a conscious decision at ByM on their route rather than follow others unintentionally.

PR acknowledged that the situation at the intersection required more clarity on the ground and there were various options that could be considered. Current figures indicated that Crib Coch has approximately 27,000 in 2019 (an average of 520 per week) with a large majority of walkers moving in an east to west direction.

ii) Item 9d EN asked if the dog signage portfolio was available yet so that members could see this.

PR stated that this had been compiled although there had been a delay and would try to get a copy to the members for the next meeting for their perusal.

iii) Item 5 DMcA mentioned that the Ramblers UK now have an App for those who may wish to find out about a particular lost (ways) path and how to go about this process. This is called `Don't lose your way` and links can be found via the Ramblers Cymru website¹

iv) SNPA Access Strategy Review update

PR stated that he was currently reviewing this document and would hopefully bring a outline draft to the LAF members in June for their perusal. He stressed that although this was a review it needed to fit into the sections of the new Park Management Plan.

4. Correspondence

i) Snowdonia National Park Partnership Plan – Cynllun Eryri 2020 – the statutory Management Plan for Snowdonia National Park

PR explained that this was still out for consultation with the various stakeholders (including SNPA staff and members) and the public and many people had submitted ideas, observations and comments. The closing date for public exercise is the 13th March.

DF commented that the document made reference to the Cylchdaith yr Wyddfa – Snowdon Circular path) and appreciated that this was a lengthy process already and asked what was the latest state of play.

<https://www.snowdonpartnership.co.uk/projects>
¹<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/dont-lose-your-way-2026.aspx>

PR stated that he was disappointed with the progress in one section in particular and that he had written to the landowners once again explaining the National Parks position on this but they fully committed to pursue this. Although that was only one section there were also others which would require considerable work. He stressed that it was not intended to have a full cycle/bridleway around the massif – just a simple set of linkages with some upgrades where feasible and some not. But certainly completing the link between Llanberis - Rhyd Ddu – Beddgelert as bridleway/ cycleway was appealing as most of the route was already in place and available except for one. This was also fully supported by the WG.

DF also mentioned within the Plan stated that links between communities were crucial. Whilst Lon Gwyrfai (LG) did achieve this in some part it still required linkages further down the valley to Waunfawr and Caernarfon and for visitors to consider using the trains for getting out or back as part of this experience.

PR fully concurred with DF view that the western side was not fully linked up. He explained that original intention was that LG went as far as Betws Garmon but what we have currently was what was achievable at the time. But they would continue to look at this.

ii) Snowdon Partnership Transport and Parking review update

PR informed the members that as part of the work of the Snowdon Partnership Plan consultants had been appointed for this project and various stakeholder meetings were planned. There would also be an online questionnaire to enable people to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Further information can be found on the following link².

The Officer responsible (Catrin Glyn) had recently sent a link to this directly to all our LAF members.

He would report back on this important review when the report was available.

5. Mountain Bothies Association – update on their progress in Snowdonia National Park – Mr Tony Blackburn MBA Area organiser Wales.

TB thanked the members for the invitation to come once again to present them with the latest news from the MBA and their activities particularly those developments that had occurred within Snowdonia. It was some seven years ago when he last addressed the members.

He explained the background of the organisation

The MBA was established in 1965 as a charity registered in Scotland and the bulk of the bothies are in Scotland where bothies are a well established tradition. The MBA now have 105 spread across Scotland, England and there are now 9 in Wales (an increase in 2 since his last visit to the LAF). Membership currently stands at

<https://www.snowdonpartnership.co.uk/projects>_____

4000 and most work is undertaken by volunteers and they achieve some 1000 volunteer days each year. Last year approximately £100,000 on bothy maintenance across the UK. Applying standard rate volunteer time this equates to another £100,000 in monetary value. The MBA has also been awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service.

Bothies are all different in design but most are all old buildings and at least several hours walk from any public road. They are unlocked and open to all users but they only offer very basic shelters with no `mod cons` such as running water or electricity. People are expected to leave them as they find them for the next visitors. They were also very keen to maintain any local characteristics and physical history of the buildings they use.

Within Snowdonia there are now 4 bothies.

Cwm Dulyn (east Carneddau), The Arenig Fawr bothy, Cae Amos – near Cwm Pennant and Penrhos Isaf in Coed Y Brenin near Ganllwyd.

He showed various slides of other buildings used across the UK and the work undertaken by volunteers.

Cae Amos is the latest addition to their Snowdonia bothies. This was previously a building used by the Leeds Mountaineering Club which they could no longer maintain and following discussions with the owner (who is hugely supportive) it was then decided that this would make an ideal addition to their bothies in Snowdonia. After considerable work this is now proving to be popular. *Unusually Cae Amos has a flushing loo rather than a long drop toilet.*

PR asked if the MBA had any formal links with the Duke of Edinburgh Awards (DoE) scheme. These would be ideal particularly for DoE groups finding themselves in poor weather.

TB replied that they were aware of their use by those groups but there are no formal links. As DoE groups are larger they tended to camp alongside them on occasion. He stressed that their MBA clientele were mostly small groups of people. But it was an important consideration that many DoE participants would come back to the area and may well be the bothy users or volunteers in the future.

PR asked if the MBA had any issues with Planning in terms of renovating these `old buildings`.

TB replied that they had had remarkably few. But on occasion this is necessary and they are always conscious of this issue but generally this is a continuation of habitation.

JP asked if they used materials that were in keeping with the age and location of the buildings whilst undertaking repairs.

TB replied that they would also replace `like for like` whenever possible and no changes in materials occur generally (except when replacing asbestos sheeting). There have to be a compromise in some instances.

EN asked about environmental issues such as toileting and what the arrangements were generally.

TB replied that most bothies have drop toilets which are simply deep holes in the ground. Each location has different issues and have different solutions.

EN thanked TB for his time and a very interesting presentation on the latest work of the MBA.

6. **Snowdonia National Park Dark Skies Project**

Dani Robertson - Eryri Dark Skies Officer

DR explained that the Dark Skies Partnership covered a large area including the National Park and surrounding Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's) including parts of Pen Llyn, Anglesey and areas within the Clwydian Range.

The National Park was designated an Dark Skies area in 2015 and since then the project has been working to identify and establish the best sites.

One of the main reasons for their establishment was to protect the scientific, educational and cultural heritage and permanent enjoyment of our dark skies. within Snowdonia and pockets of the AONB's. These are designated due to their high quality night skies with less light pollution than many other areas.

Only 2% of Britain's population have access to a true dark sky environment with the remainder having excessive levels of light pollution where night skies are not visible in any detail.

She showed satellite imagery for Europe which showed significant areas with the high light pollution. An interesting `factoid` Brussels has 7 lamp posts per person.

In terms of Wales this is separated into differing areas with north east Wales and south Wales having the highest light pollution. Anglesey has some good areas for reduced light pollution but one factor that affects the island the light pollution from Dublin. One of the darkest areas in the area is Uwch Mynydd on the Lleyrn which is proving popular especially during meteor shower events.

Her role is to monitor this issue across the NP and she was working to address issues especially in the north. She is now working in conjunction with the local authorities such as Gwynedd, Conwy and Denbighshire to encourage dark skies thinking and is also working on light pollution mitigation measures mainly through new street lighting which do not throw light into the sky to cause `glow`. She is also working with some private landowners to encourage them to reduce their night glow.

She showed some innovative solutions in terms of reducing light pollution such as `teraflow` ground tiles or mixed with tarmac to glow in the dark and where street lamps technically be removed. There are some available for decking or steps/stairs. If anyone is interested in such solutions at home then please get in touch with her and she would try to assist.

Within the NP and to get our DS status core zones were established – with the Cadair Idris area being probably one of the darkest areas. She regularly checks various locations around the NP to measure decreases or increases in darkness.

She cited other benefits of reducing light pollution and the DS project generally: I.e. health and well being, the environment including direct benefits for wildlife that require dark areas, cultural heritage and the tourism economy.

She stressed that although a lot is known about other types of pollution not a great deal was known about the effects of light pollution. Before the invention of artificial light all species were prompted by natural circadian rhythms and artificial lighting was created this has affected not only us but also the natural environment – that is a great part of our biodiversity needs darkness. There is growing evidence that artificial light may be the cause of issues in humans such as stress, insomnia, poor mental health and depression.

In terms of the sustainability many older lights are not efficient and waste of lot of energy especially where lights are not specifically designed for a purpose or are too bright. However, these issues are relatively easy to combat.

She described the guidance that people can follow. And that where possible shielded lighting is the best which has considerably less upright leakage and many of older types of lights within the National Park have been changed. She stressed that the cheapest LED lights may not necessarily be the best so it's an important part of here role is to impart this knowledge to people.

In terms of biodiversity lighting is detrimental to wildlife as 60% of our biodiversity required darkness to survive. Excessive light is bad for migratory birds - typically Ynys Enlli (Bardsey) when the lighthouse changed to an LED type lamp this resulted in many birds colliding with the lighthouse and being killed. They have now changed this to a new red light and this has solved the issue. Lighting also affects other ecosystems such as the bat and insect populations which in turn affects night time pollinators. There is also evidence that light pollution has moved spring forward by some weeks adversely affecting many other natural orders.

In terms of our cultural heritage the night sky is important for many myths and legends - many are associated with farming going back many centuries where the night sky would dictate the differing farming calendar.

The Glover Report 2019 acknowledged that it was important that the younger generation did not miss out on experiencing nature and that they should be encouraged to spend a night under the stars as part of their appreciation of the environment.

Astro tourism is now a growing phenomenon and this is a year round activity. And any celestial occurrences such as meteor showers are now creating more of an interest. As Dark Skies Officer runs events and as well as local people many travel some distance to attend with their telescopes and cameras which also has an economic benefit.

RW asked if it was possible to record light pollution levels

DR relied that it was possible to record different areas. If they contacted her that could be arranged.

EN asked if any of the new light pollution measures were enforceable.

DR stated that there is `supplementary planning guidance` for new planning applications but not for existing dwellings.

PR added that for information certainly there was a great deal more people were walking at night particularly on Snowdon summit and many lights can be seen throughout the night. Most are Three Peaks events but having witnessed this himself it did spoil the night sky view it for others. So this is something to think about. He was also particularly impressed in the way Gwynedd Council (Highways lighting) had changed many of their streetlights for new down lights and this had transformed many villages including his own.

DR mentioned that there is certainly a great deal more interest from government and local authorities in the concept of dark skies and they can see many advantages in promoting these types of policies.

JP thanked DR for what are a very interesting and important issue and one which may prompt several ideas for him.

EN thanked DR for her time and her interesting presentation.

7. Snowdonia National Park Access Timeline An update on this mini web based project

PR explained that about six months ago he was attending a meeting with fellow NP Access Officers. The Peak District National Park revealed that they had, in time for their 70th Anniversary in 2021 and the founding of the first National Parks they had created a simple `access timeline`. Although this was interesting it was simply a list recording the history of access from the Mountains Act, Kinder Scout to the present day.

He thought that with some work we could create our own for the SNP. Initially he thought this a weeks work but this proved to be a far lengthier exercise and after trawling thorough archive material and tracking down old staff. The result was an enhanced list but threaded through with interesting events and photographs of the history of access in the Park. This is now been made available to the public via their website. It is also an invaluable source of information and reference point for SNP

staff, members and LAF members but also the public at large. He thought the members would like to see this for themselves. Other NP's are also considering doing something similar in their own style.

We have also received some good feedback.

DF mentioned that reading from the timeline – which he thought was a very interesting and useful document. He added that in the 1936 line it mentions the 'Standing Committee on National Parks'. This group is still in existence and is known as the Campaign for National Parks (CNP) and asked if it was possible that this fact could be mentioned in that section of the timeline. The original name the Snowdonia Society as it is today was also different at that time and was previously known as Snowdonia National Park Society.

DMcA mentioned there the term Natural Nature Reserves should read 'National'.

PR thanked DF and DMcA for those observations and would amend what they had highlighted.

8. Update on the Welsh Government's Access Reform Advisory Group's business - known collectively as the ARAG groups.

PR reported that these groups had now been formed and members appointed. There were three of these;

1 Changes to *open access land working group – to consider reforms to CRoW access land – (PR is a member of this particular group and has input from other NP Officers).* Of particular note was the fact that the status of the All Wales Coastal Path may be denoted, throughout its length, as CRoW access land which was an interesting proposal which was still under discussion.

EN commented that this may be difficult as some of the line of the AWCP in Gwynedd was some distance from the 'coast' and such so asked if this was possible in its entirety.

PR commented that this was a true but GC in conjunction the NRW (and the SNP for our observations) were reviewing the line with a view to making changes wherever possible. This is an ongoing exercise but EN had made a good point that is under consideration. Although most changes that occur will be in the south of the NP but he would update them on any developments.

EN asked what the advantage was to denote this as CRoW access land.

PR stated that under CRoW Act then by default there would be reduced liability for landowners and that was a distinct advantage for them in coastal locations where the terrain may be difficult i.e. cliffs and this would give landowners more confidence.

2 This group - appointed as Technical Advisory Group for PRow reform has met twice – that is to discuss and recommend changes to the various Acts that affect Public Rights of Way with a view to reduce the administrative, costs and bureaucratic processes involved and *matters that have been frequently discussed by the LAF in the past*). All the previous recommendations made for the Green and subsequent White papers will be included and they may also choose to add a couple more. These discussions will also look at how flexible the existing PRow network could be in terms of users.

3 Communicating Access Rights. This group will inform and make recommendations for the promotion of these policies.

TH confirmed that he was also a member of the Group 3. Currently they were looking at the production of some form of all access maps. And also to produce some form of access plan.

PR mentioned that some members may remember that some 8 years ago the CCW had given them a presentation on this very subject and the NP's and local authorities went to considerable lengths to provide relevant information to the CCW at the time. However, this did not come to fruition and this looked like an attempt to reinvigorate the process but he thought this a useful exercise.

He stressed that the Access to Water discussion group was not a part of the aforementioned ARAG process. There were held under the auspices of the NRW and the National Access Forum (NAF) sub group. Two meetings had been held and the NP's were represented by two Officers.

The NRW will produce regular updates for all interested parties including the LAF's so information will be consistent.

9. Any Other Business

i) PR mentioned that one of the members (RC) had asked a question regarding the use of e-bikes – battery powered cycles. So for information there are `rules`.

These are subject to certain criteria:

- a) Users must be 14 years of age or over to use them.
- b) Their motors must be less than 250W capacity
- c) They should ne be able to propel a cyclists more than 15.5mph (i.e. max speed)
- d) They are allowed to use any bridleway/cycleway similarly to a normal pedal cycle.

ii) DMcA asked if there had been any movement on a potential bridge over the Llugwy from the Colwyd route outside Capel Curig. As users had to navigate along the road to CC.

PR replied that he had some Welsh Government monies set aside to ask Gwynedd Consultancy to undertake a road safety audit to assess this. However, the more he

had looked at this the more difficult it appears as the sight lines on that section of the A5 for crossings and speed limits look poor. However, he would report back on this when a report was to hand.

10. Recommended Agenda items for next meeting

a) Introduction of new members & process of Election of Chair & Vice Chair.

PR explained that as this was technically the current members last meeting the next one in June would be first for any new members as selected by the Authority sub group.

He was pleased that many members had chosen to re apply which was gratifying. The next meeting will be chaired by him and then the members could choose their Chair and Vice Chair. From previous experience it was best for nominees for Chairs and Vice Chair to advance a brief CV's to the Secretary at that meeting. He would then circulate these to members with a view to holding a vote at the next meeting in September or earlier if everyone responded by e mail possibly.

He stressed that they are short of some representation of users in particular the equine and canoeing sectors which should be addressed if possible.

It is also hoped to keep the membership down the 18 including the Chair and Vice Chair. This is a manageable number in terms of the administration and maintaining a quorum at any given time. So less the local authorities (3) and 1 representative for disabilities then that left 14 – 7 from users and 7 from the landowners (and if the Chair and Vice Chair are also equally from both sectors). This is something similar to what we have now.

It is interesting that under the current CRow Act review we have recommended that the tenure of membership is extended to 5 years instead of the current 3. This will reduce our burden of administration for re election and give us more consistency in membership. He appreciated that in terms of access there are steep learning curves as issues can be complex.

b) SNPA Recreation Strategy review – update

c) Warden Service restructure update

d) RW asked if we could have a Carneddau Project (HLF) update

PR would ask their Project Officer if someone could be made available for this.

EN asked if there was any sign of the Gwynedd ROWIP.

PR stated that there had not been any movement from GC on this so he had excluded it from the agenda but something may appear this spring hopefully.

EN thanked all members and Officers for their contribution and support over the last three years particularly those who he knew were not returning.

PR on behalf of the Authority re-iterated this sentiment as the Officers and Authority valued their contribution.

11. Date of next Meeting: 8th June 2020