

**Minutes of the South Snowdonia Local Access Forum Meeting held on
Tuesday 27th September 2022 at 5.45 p.m.
At The Oakley Arms Hotel, Maentwrog**

Present – Members:

Mr Hedd Pugh (Chair)	Cllr Dewi Owen
Mrs Gaynor Davies	Mr Eryl Jones Williams
Mrs Lesley Amison	Mr Alun Edwards
Mr David Coleman	Mr Aled Thomas
Mr Delwyn Evans	

Officers / Observers:

Peter Rutherford (SNPA)	David P Jones (SNPA)
Rhian P Williams (SNPA)	Gwyn Evans (GC)
Adam Daniel (SNPA)	Arwel Morris (SNPA)

1. Apologies

Mr Ashley Charlwood	Cllr John Pughe Roberts
Mr Emlyn Roberts	Mr Dafydd Dafis
Mr Huw Roberts	Mr Alun Evans
Mr Geraint Rowlands	

HP welcomed everyone to this evening's proceedings

2. Declaration of Interest

DO asked why the meeting was not held in Plas tan Y Bwlch as it was so close.

RW replied that originally the meeting was two weeks prior to this but as they has moved the date forward Plas was not available this evening due to another block booking.

3. Previous Minutes

Minutes Approved

3.1 Extra agenda item.

PR explained that there was a requirement for the SLAF to have a Vice Chair and that if the Chair (as in our case) was from the landowning community then the Vice Chair should normally be from within the user groups representation.

With this in mind he made the suggestion that we appoint one this evening if possible. One candidate did stand out, but it was to the members to elect or decide on someone.

The consensus was that this be more fully discussed at the next meeting in December.

Agreed

4. Matters Arising

i) Common Land and motorise vehicles.

PR explained that the Sect 34 (Road Traffic Act 1988) sign was used when landowners requested them where recurring problems arise. This is to deter people accessing common land with vehicles without lawful authority. They are available for free if any landowner is having issues on their common land. But it is unlawful activity and is a prosecutable offence under the Act.

AT added that although a sign was useful it was difficult to establish any boundaries without an associated map.

PR commented that in the past the Police have said that without a sign it becomes more difficult to prosecute offenders and if a sign is placed in the vicinity of exit/access points then this is irrefutable and becomes easier to deal with. They have erected signs in places such as Mynydd Moel – near Yr Wyddfa and others off the Sychnant pass.

AE added that the delineation of commons boundary may not be apparent from a simple sign.

HP commented that for larger areas of commons this is more difficult to `police`.

EJW asked where these were recorded.

PR stated that all commons were recorded on the Commons Register which was held by Gwynedd Council and is available as a public document if anyone needed to make any inquiries.

AD added that it may be useful if we could have the north Wales Police logo included.

PR stated that he would inquire with their Rural Crimes Team for their opinion on this at the next opportunity.

ii) Disabled Toilets in Morfa Mawddach

PR reminded the members that DE had raised the point that the disabled toilet facility in Morfa Mawddach was closed over the winter putting disabled people at a disadvantage. To compound this the old RADAR¹ type locks had been removed some years ago. The Properties Manager of the NP has now declared that the Morfa Mawddach toilets will now be open throughout the year which will help matters. However, other seasonal (including those with disabled toilets will remain closed due to resources).

DE stated that such facilities were crucial to older people and those with disabilities as they frequently pre plan their trips out and know where facilities are available.

¹ R.A.D.A.R. (The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation) promotes a U.K. national scheme, whereby locks specially manufactured and are fitted to toilets and can only be operated using a RADAR key. These keys are available to disabled or registered blind people to enable them to access facilities.

EJW added that over the years RADAR type keys worked well. However some users did not close the doors correctly once they left - leaving them open to others leading to misuse and vandalism.

If these locks are reinstalled anywhere then the message to key holders is that they have a responsibility to ensure they are closed properly so the facilities can be available for the next person.

PR added that it was certainly easier to manage disabled facilities when they were open `year-round` but that seasonal toilet facilities were problematic as they had to be cleaned and maintained on a daily basis and this was simply not possible due to the resources available.

EJW mentioned that Cregynnan lakes parking and toilets were in an isolated place but is still a popular area and that these were open to all.

PR added that there had been some problems reported over the summer. The toilets block was the property of the National Trust and they had resolved the issues.

DPJ added that the Properties department of the NP had received some grant monies to upgrade their toileting facilities including Penmaenpool.

EJW commented that the WG would surely fund any of this under the Future Generations Act and was important in terms of health and well-being. He was pleased that the Morfa Mawddach toilets issue was being addressed by the NP.

DE commented that this work is funded by the grant monies proffered by the Visit Wales – `Brilliant Basics`² to improve tourism facilities including toilets across Wales.

PR would inquire.

HP thanked PR for the update

iii) Gwynedd Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan review.

PR informed the members that a meeting had been between the LAF's subgroup (Arfon Dwyfor, and Snowdonia north and south) held in Plas Tan Y Bwlch. Unfortunately due to a mix up there were no representatives from the SLAF present. *Invitations had gone out, but he was at a loss as to sure how this happened.* However, there was a very frank discussion regarding the Council's document, which the members thought was a rational approach by GC given the resources issues they faced.

² **Brilliant Basics Fund 2022-2023** (Local Authority and National Park round) is a capital WG via Tourism Wales fund to deliver basic small-scale tourism infrastructure improvements across all of Wales in order to ensure that all visitors have a positive and memorable experience throughout all aspects of their stay.

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/news-and-blogs/news/brilliant-basics-fund>

They then went through the associated questionnaire and PR noted their respective comments to each question and agreed the wording to be included in their joint response.

These had since been translated to ensure a bilingual response and had now been sent to GC for their consideration.

PR stressed that members were still free to send in their own responses to the questionnaire if they wished. Albeit it was not easy in the format provided by GC.

The NP will also need to respond but he didn't see a great deal of difference in their response.

iv) Barmouth Viaduct

p4. EJW commented that unfortunately Network Rail (NR) had found that the Barmouth viaduct required more work than first envisaged and that the work will be carried on into next year. It is proving difficult to get exact dates but would advise PR when he had more specific information.

PR commented that with the changing of dates last year it had been most difficult for the Warden Service to keep changing their signs along the Mawddach Trail. He thanked EJW for the information.

He added that recently he had received a video from Gwynedd Council of a number of motorcycles crossing the viaduct in one large group. Although this is only de facto³ access and after some inquiries he had contacted the group and asked them to consider going through in smaller groups and with suitable time intervals in between to lessen the impact on walkers/cyclists. They were receptive to the idea and hopefully they would comply. They would monitor this activity.

GLE commented that GC did receive complaints regarding motor cyclists crossing the viaduct but agreed that it should be done sensitively.

The viaduct did not carry any formal public rights such as Public Rights of Way and Gwynedd Council (GC) have an agreement with NR (as owners of the viaduct) to allow people to pass and re pass. The viaduct is also part of the All-Wales Coastal Path.

EJW thanked both the NP and GC for addressing to this issue. He was aware that some local people with motorcycles did use the viaduct for work purposes, so it was a difficult one to balance.

5. Correspondence

- i) A review of the All-Wales Coastal Path (AWCP) on its 10th anniversary – recommendation for future developments.

³ `De facto` - Existing in fact whether with lawful authority or not.

PR advised the members that the Authority had received a letter from Huw Iranca Davies asking for the NP (and others) opinion on the future of the AWCP. This had been at very short notice. The NP had sent a response which include a number of points outlined below:

1. That funding remained at adequate levels across Wales to ensure its future. Especially given the increases in use by the public.
2. That they continue to strive to look for and create additional linkages to and from local communities to enable them to benefit from this development.
3. To consider the notion of the creation of higher rights where opportunities present themselves including cycle/bridleway linkages and all ability or less abled route choices.
4. To consider its long-term status – i.e. as a part of the family of National Trails or to be known by some other designation.
5. To consider other and simpler mechanisms other than by use of the Highways Act for cases where the AWCP is affected by coastal erosion and where fall-back positions may be required.

PR added that many of the points they had made were contained in the report albeit obliquely.

HP asked if it possible to get a copy of the response and subsequent report.

PR stated that he would try to circulate this to members.

EJW commented that this did show that the WG was listening to people who took the time to respond.

ii) National Parks' letter to landowners regarding rights of way furniture.

AD wished to advise the members that they had drafted a standard letter (pre Covid) and at the time had discussed this with various stakeholders including the farming unions and the highways authorities. This letter would now be given to landowners when the NP installed any new furniture on their land.

This stated that although the NP may have helped to provide and install furniture on Rights of Way it was in fact the responsibility of the landowner to provide and maintain them. And also that it was Gwynedd Council (and Conwy in the north of the NP) who were the `highways authority` and not the NP. A record of this will then be kept.

Any furniture would also carry a disc stating that it was installed by the NP to avoid any confusion.

HP commented that this had been confusing to landowners over the years especially where the NP or GC had installed furniture on their behalf. However, it was landowners responsibility to ensure that they were in working order and safe to use and this letter would help clarify the situation.

AT thought the letter may have been too nicely put!

AE thought it well worded and was respectful and was far better than many he received from WG. This was about creating a positive partnership approach between the NP, GC, and landowners.

HP added that this was useful for new furniture but there was a considerable number of existing gates and stiles which had been put in many years ago across the NP and this may help to clarify the situation.

AD added that it was important to make these points to landowners when any new furniture was installed.

6. Cambrian Way Update – Oliver Wicks followed by Amanda Hill – Paths to Wellbeing

HP welcomed OW and AH to the online proceedings.

OW thanked the members for the opportunity to update them on the progress they had made on the Cambrian Way.

For the benefit of new members he explained that the CW ran the length of Wales from Cardiff (Bute Park) to Conwy (Conwy castle) and is 298 miles in length and takes in the most mountainous areas of Wales including the Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia National Parks and nine local authorities. They also consulted with other stakeholder bodies such as the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and others such as the National Trust (NT) and independent landowners to build support for this project.

The trail was originally created by a lifelong member of the Ramblers Tony Drake, and it should be remembered that this was well before the CRoW Act which now enabled legitimate access along the majority of its length.

Since that time they have managed to update and create a new professionally produced guidebook which has been well received which contains new information. They have also managed to get a halfway bench and post installed as a tribute to TD. The logo is a Welsh lady's hat which is well recognised by experienced walkers.

The Ordnance Survey – have agreed to have this route included on their maps for Wales and they were grateful for the support they received from the National Parks and local authorities for this.

He showed various slides of the work they had undertaken.

A major part of their work had been to assess its condition and availability and also its waymarking. Waymark locations were important, and it was agreed with the NP and local authorities that these only be placed at strategic locations. Various Ramblers Cymru groups across the country have assisted with these activities and many are now `trail guardians` and attend to any issues that may arise on their sections.

It was important that people understood their key messaging in that this route is not your average mountain walk but is a serious undertaking within some of the most difficult terrain in Wales and the UK and waymarking is not so frequent so certain mountains skills sets are required.

He mentioned that the Peoples Post Code Lottery has been very supportive of the Cambrian Way and they had received some attention from programmes such as Countryfile and various social media.

They also have a link to Adventure Smart⁴ which has proved to be invaluable in terms of promoting awareness of mountain safety and preparation.

Apart from the guidebook they have also now developed some promotional merchandise such as tee shirts and sow on badges to promote this route and put something back into the Cambrian Way Trust.

PR asked if the link to Travel Line Cymru was to create some sort of linear linkages to public transport to enable day sections to be walked.

OW replied that this was the intention, although understandably access to some sections of the route are severely limited, however, they were keen to highlight and promote any sections where access back and forth was achievable by public transport.

HP thanked OW for his update on the progress of the Cambrian Way.

AH. Introduced herself as the Paths to Wellbeing (PTW) Officer for Ramblers Cymru.

She explained that Ramblers Cymru⁵ had received a £1.2m grant from WG – part funded by the European Rural development Fund (ERDF) to deliver this access project across Wales and involved 18 communities from the beginning of the project in June of last year running to May 2023.

Working with these communities they were working to develop community circular routes, family friendly routes and shorter walks. This included improving access by replacing stiles for gates wherever possible and they were working with landowners, the local authorities, and National Parks to achieve this.

To date they have already installed 20 gates out of the 180 they intend to replace in total.

There are some 600 `signed up` volunteers from within the Ramblers and hopefully they will take on the legacy of continuing to improve their respective Rights Of Way networks once this scheme is concluded.

As part of the overall scheme they have worked with other partners and also included biodiversity and citizen science engagement days for butterfly counts and other species

⁴ <https://www.adventuresmart.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/pathstowellbeing>

counts, and all had been well supported. This is also useful for the promotion of the Rights of Way network as a means of connecting with nature.

Another objective was to organise vegetation clearances on RoW and also clearing `invasive species` including Himalayan balsam. Other activities included community days to plant a considerable number of trees this coming winter season and the planting of wildflower meadows in the spring and building bird boxes with children. They have also made links within the corporate sector to encourage staff volunteers' days.

They were also keen to work with youth groups across Wales including the Scouts and Brownies and included paths, map, and navigation training.

As part of the scheme they also have some benches to install in some community green spaces and there are also some art installations to be put in.

All the routes have been surveyed and recommendations will be made as to how they can be improved, and they are sharing this information with authorities and other stakeholders.

The project also involved organising walks for the harder to reach groups and working with the Welsh Refugee Council and Diverse Cymru.

EJW asked if there were any projects under way in this area.

AH replied that there was a scheme earmarked for Penrhyndeudraeth.

EJW asked if there was any money allocated to keeping open community toilets.

AH stated that this scheme did not include this issue although she had considerable empathy regarding this issue generally.

PR asked if AH could mention the schemes under way in the north of the NP.

AH stated that there were schemes in the Conwy valley and Holy Island on Anglesey.

HP thanked AH and OW for their interesting presentation regarding the two substantial projects and for giving their time this evening.

7. Update on activities in the Llyn Tegid area – Arwel Morris

AM introduced himself as the NP Llyn Tegid area Warden and thanked the members for the opportunity to give their perspective on their role as Wardens in the area and what that entailed.

He highlighted the difficult issues that the post Covid period had brought to the area and showed several slides of the problems they had faced, many of which were reflected across the NP.

In and around Llyn Tegid (sun and water as the main attraction) had unfortunately brought many negative issues and these related to parking, littering/waste, fly camping and poor behaviour. Over the season this was best described as being 24/7.

This also included Llangower car park where they had experienced considerable difficulties – generally the parking capacity was 70 spaces, but they had seen regularly over 100 cars parked on the site and frequently overspilling into the road which in turn brings other issues especially for local residents and others using the back road to Llanywchlyn.

They has worked closely with the LLangower and Llanywchlyn Community councils and local Councillors and GC over these issues. Hopefully by having clearways this may help.

HP commented that they had experienced something similar in Cwm Cywarch. We were lucky to a greater degree that people want to visit the area, but additional parking should be provided. In Cwm Cywarch the creation of additional spaces had worked well.

He added that if parking and roadside were not available then surely there would be displacement which had the capacity to cause issues elsewhere.

AM stated that he completely understood this comment, but the Community Councils did not want to create additional parking in the area in places such as the Neuadd (Community Centre). Possibly they were missing a significant revenue stream here that could go to the Community Councils, but it was their decision.

DE asked who would police the roadway once yellow lines appeared.

AM stated that this was a very relevant point and was an issue that had been discussed. It should be policed by GC.

He further explained that overnight parking was an issue in Llyn Tegid which was difficult to control. Although there were many campsites in the area there were some diehard campervan users who were determined to park overnight alongside the lake in the NP car park and this was frequently up to 12 a night. And it was evident that by morning they were often responsible for a great deal of the litter bags that accumulated alongside the nearby bins.

EJW commented that surely that NP Wardens should have powers to hand out tickets to people leaving litter and parking without consent.

AM replied that that scenario would entail using bylaws and this was difficult.

AD (through the Chair) added that this was a difficult situation to contend with and although there may be bylaws going back to the days of Meirionydd and Caernarfonshire (on a personal level) he did not feel comfortable with Wardens having such powers and could result in a change in relationship with the public. They preferred to work with other stakeholders such as the Police, GC, and Conwy to control this in some way.

In terms of the overnight parking they were looking at various options such as barrier and ANPR⁶ systems for the Llyn Tegid car park. But the more they looked into this the more complex and expensive it becomes.

EJW asked why they could not charge for overnight parking.

AD replied that whilst the NP charges for its car parks during the day if an overnight charge were applied then it would be classed as a camp site and would then technically take business away from other providers and would contravene planning consents.

HP (declaring an interest) added that this was a valid point in that in that it could affect other sites if the Llyn Tegid car park offered overnight parking and facilities. There were a minority who took advantage by parking in lay-bys and other sites and subsequently brought little into the economy.

GLE added that it was unfortunate that there had been many instances where some overnight campers had left everything behind them. There were plans by GC to arrange for some formal overnight sites - `Aires`⁷ around the area where people could park up legally overnight.

PR commented that it was important to remember that we have all been through one of the most socially difficult periods the UK has ever seen and post Covid lockdowns and we had witnessed, first-hand, some very challenging behaviour across the NP. There were some minor elements of the visiting public who had not been able to go overseas or elsewhere and some had instead hired or bought camper vans (or just vans to sleep in). It was unfortunate that some had no previous relationship with the countryside and clearly no understanding or respect for their environment. It was up to NP to provide as much information and assistance as possible to help.

AM added that this was not unusual and to a limited degree had been on the increase in recent years especially during periods of good weather. It was often difficult to get our messaging over to people. During Covid it was their job to encourage and explain the `rules`. However, with Bala and Llyn Tegid being in relatively close proximity to the larger conurbations in the northwest and the midlands and with easy to access by road, then this only exacerbated their problems.

It was a very difficult part of their work to knock on doors of camper vans early morning asking people to move on and this made staff uneasy. And unfortunately a considerable amount of their time was taken up collecting and dealing with accumulations of litter in and around Llyn Tegid and Llyn Celyn particularly after a busy weekend.

EJW asked who the NP liaised with regarding these issues.

AD commented that the section regularly met Management Team to decide on actions and also met with other authorities to discuss issues that affected them jointly. They also worked closely with the NP communication section on their public messaging and they in

⁶ Automatic Number Plate Recognition system.

⁷ Motorhome stopovers, known as Aires, are mostly public parking areas and some private land where motorhome and campervan users may stop overnight for free or for a small fee.

turn were working with Visit Wales to ensure national tourism messaging. But without doubt post Covid had seen not only an increase in numbers but also a very different element of the visiting public which had presented significant challenges.

LA asked who was responsible for the bins in Llyn Tegid (those in AM's slides) and who paid for emptying these.

AD stated that the NP were the responsibility of the NP as part of the refuse collections in Llyn Tegid. The annual charges were in the region of £1200 but that weekly charges were added for the collections and these costs all fell to the NP.

AT mentioned that sometimes it may be an idea to remove bins altogether as they tended to attract other rubbish. Has this been tried in that area?

AD replied that they had tried this by removing bins in Cwellyn car park but that this entailed regular patrols to ensure that it remained litter free and then became labour intensive so sometimes this was counterproductive.

AM added that the Community Councils had asked for additional bins in LLangower as there has been so many problems over the busiest periods.

DPJ added that these issues did vary from place to place, and some car parks experienced few issues.

EJW commented that post Covi he never experienced so many complaints from local residents about certain elements of visitor's who brought these types of problems. He hoped that all the authorities could get together to solve these problems. In terms of the camper vans there should be limited public places to park, but they must have facilities similar to ones found in Europe.

DO added that similar problems had occurred in Aberdovey, and they had never seen so many people camping overnight on the beaches and all the issues that this brings – litter and other `waste` regardless of a great deal of signage in place advising otherwise.

EJW added that removing bins had been done in the past.

PR commented that the NP had removed bins in the Nant Peris and Cromlech lay-by's some years ago and this had led to a reduction in litter but in some locations this was not feasible given the sheer volume of people and litter generated.

AD confirmed that they had tried, as an experiment, removing the bins in Pen Y Pass but this had not worked and resulted in people simply dumping large volumes of rubbish overnight.

AM mentioned that as part of their normal work they had been busy removing stiles and replacing them with gates wherever possible in the area and this was successful as long as landowners were confident that they worked. The promoted Llyn Tegid circular was now gated only with no stiles. They had also installed some new footbridges recently.

He showed slides of algal blooms which is a phenomenon that has occurred regularly since 1996 - especially during hot weather. They can deal with this by identifying hotspots with signage and isolating them. By today thankfully the public have a better understanding of this issue.

As part of their work they still did school visits usually before the summer break. This involved topics such as water safety given that many local pupils may be use the lake for paddling or swimming over the summer.

Other activities involved dealing with invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed especially within the Dee catchment. This was done by themselves, volunteers, and contractors where necessary.

AM also mentioned the flood embankment works underway at the north end currently underway by the NRW contactors. The remedial works were necessary as some of the embankments had been compromised by self-seeded trees and these needed to be removed. So far they had not faced lengthy closures along the waterfront, but some closures were unavoidable. The NRW issued regular updates on this.

HP thanked AM for his presentation and their work especially over the last two years. After this evening presentation he was sure that the members fully appreciated their efforts given the extraordinary situation they had faced post Covid.

8. Motor Homes information leaflet.

Following an inquiry by a LAF members at the last meeting he thought it prudent to inform the members that this Guide to Motorhome and Campervan owners' leaflet had been put together by the Communication sections of the NP following many of the issues discussed this evening which had occurred across the NP. Other NP's across the UK had all reported similar issues.

It was very much about enjoying the countryside responsibly and contained references to the Countryside Code, the dog poo issue and litter/waste and was a very useful leaflet.

These problems had been compounded by some people simply sleeping in ordinary vans in lay-bys, in fields and alongside rivers and lakes and leaving everything behind.

EJW asked if there were some elements within local communities who may turn against this tourism sector? He was also worried that this was affecting NP staff.

PR that whilst for some people some things had been intensely frustrating – and the NP fully appreciated this, many people made a living from the sector – which is worth some £1.5b to Gwynedd's economy so it was important to get some perspective on this. Their monitoring figures indicated that there were spikes in July, August and September which showed that normal carrying capacity was exceeded in many places by 5% - 8%– *and was reflected in terms of parking.* The overall numbers (which were similar to last year's post Covid period) were again crammed into those three months giving a false impression that this had been a year-round trend.

In terms of staff – *and as personal view only* there was a feeling of being beleaguered following all that the post Covid period brought but that we must all mostly carry on and hope that we focus on the positives and have learned some lessons from this.

GD asked if all the motorhome sites had been contacted to enable them to go onto the NP website as she knew of some that were missing.

HP declaring an interest) added that he knew of some omissions.

AD stated that each site that was known was contacted by telephone by the Sustainable Tourism Officer, but they would look into any omissions – their list was not comprehensive.

EJW asked of the camping period had been extended from 28 to 56 days.

GLE (GC) confirmed this was the case, but some requirements still had to be met. Certainly, additional overspill car park capacity would be useful over the busy periods.

DO commented that although they had seen more camper vans in the Aberdovey area generally – most had exercised good practice, and many were self-contained. However, they had seen some more camping activities in out of the way places such as Llyn Barfog, which although was not uncommon the numbers were higher.

AE wedi ddewud fydd angen tyrchu trwy bins blwyddyn nesaf! Commented that it was possible that we may see less visitors given the financial climate.

GLE commented that perversely it may have the opposite affect in that if people did not go overseas then they numbers generally within the UK may potentially go up. It was difficult to predict.

EJW mentioned that in some countries there have specific tourist police departments to deal with similar issue. Something for the WG to consider.

HP thanked the NP staff for being proactive in dealing with this issue relating to motorhomes.

9. Recommended Agenda Items for next meeting

i) NP Recreation Strategy.

PR stated that he had recently revied this back from compliance assessment and hopefully it would be ready soon to go out once Management team had seen the latest version. It would then be circulated for internal consultation then to wider stakeholders.

He added that the LAF had already seen a draft.

HP asked members if the had any other topics then could they please contact him or PR to discuss this.

10. Any other business

- i) LA mentioned that the Barmouth 10-day Walking Festival had gone ahead again this year and conclude yesterday (26th September).

This had been successful and well attended. In total they had arranged 120 individual walkers with a maximum of 15 allocated on each. They participated in 377 walks in total. Other activities included 3 social events. *The Queens funeral did effect some of their arrangements but not unduly so. One of the social events had raised £440 for the south Snowdonia Search and Rescue Team.*

Next year the Festival will take place on 16th September to the 25th of September.

She also stated that Network Rail had been most accommodating with the replacement bus service given that the Barmouth viaduct works had made it difficult for some walks.

HP thanked LA for her update and congratulated the group on their continuing success.

- ii) *DE mentioned that there was some social media talk about re opening the old line from Dolgellau to Bont Newydd and onwards to Llanywchlyn. He was also aware of some talk about a route from Dolgellau to Traws.*

AE commented that the old line had been on the NP wish list for many years but there were missing bridges and considerable technical issues. It was interesting to note that within a short distance and parallel we had Taith Mary Jones that walkers could use albeit this was not cycle friendly.

HP added that planning new routes close to existing ones seems counterproductive and having additional routes may not be reasonable or popular with landowners.

PR commented that it was disappointing that none of the old rail lines within the NP had been acquired by the NP for use by walkers, equines, or cyclists. Or subsequently any redundant rural lines closed following the two Beeching reports.

It was interesting to note that the Hobhouse report (1947) mentioned specifically the old track bed between Caernarfon – Porthmadog as something that could be of significant benefit to the public but was never actioned by the NP after 1951.

This was all frustrating and backtracking was difficult and also required significant monies and will to achieve.

There had been one or two scoping reports regarding Llyn Celyn (White Water Centre – Bala with had been costed and this was in the region of £1.2m to replace the various structures and reacquire what was necessary.

DPJ added that those were the costs estimated almost 8 years ago so they would be higher by today.

Currently there are stretches of permissive path with agreements from the viaduct in Cwm Prysor downwards, but these were currently being reviewed.

EJW asked if Taith Mary Jones (TMJ) was waymarked. If so then this was available to the walking public

AE stated that it was waymarked confirmed by DPJ. But that TMJ was not suitable for cyclists or horse riders.

PR added that there were no higher rights attached to TMJ.

GLE mention that there was already a route of sorts between Llanywchlyn, and Bala and it may be better to invest in connecting with this in some way.

DPJ mentioned that they were in discussion with GC and how these links could be enabled.

AD mentioned that changing the criteria for Active Travel – currently under consideration by WG, may change and monies could be made available in the future for these types of linkages.

iii) AE. Wished to mention that Marathon X organisers had changed their modus operandi this year and was aware that PR had been in discussion with them over their approach to landowners which had improved. However, the new signage proved to be equally poor and their performance on the day to clear up was less than what it should have been.

PR stated that this was disappointing given his prior discussion with the organisers. Their arrangements should have been far better but plainly their post event clear ups were not well organised. He would re visit this issue with them and and report back.

iv) AT mentioned that he has a woodland which is dedicated as CRoW access land. Within it there were a considerable number of trees which are affected by Ash Die back and he had posed a question to the NRW relating to the landowners responsibility as trees under CRoW are classed as natural features and a reduced liability for landowners.

The answer he had received stated that trees were natural feature and therefore there should be no liability. However he felt that this required a more formal response from WG and NRW legal officers especially that this issue was sure to be remerge as this disease spreads to other private woodlands.

Signposting was difficult as then there may be an admission of some form of liability.

HP asked PR to confirm that the CRoW voluntary dedication was in perpetuity.

PR confirmed that it was and that it could not be retracted once dedicated under sect 16 of the CRoW Act.

HP added that any signage would acknowledge potential dangers so this leaves AT in a difficult position although it may be in keeping with the CRoW Act arguably it may also fall under his Occupiers Liability.

PR added that AT has found himself in a difficult position. He would make further inquiries with CRoW specialists Officers at the NRW and report back any conclusions or additional advice they proffered.

DO mentioned that GC Highways were engaged in tree work where infected trees may pose a danger to a highway.

AT asked PR what was the Ash Die back situation was in relation to the Mawddach Trail.

PR replied that the Mawddach Trail was not designated as CRoW access land and had no status as bridleway or cycleway (even though part of National Cycle Route 8). The majority of the trail was simply in the ownership of the NP and managed as such. The field staff were dealing with the Ash Die back along its length where necessary.

v) DO mentioned that works were now underway to replace the condemned footbridge bridge at Picnic Island on the outskirts of Aberdovey which had been blocked off for some time. This had involved NR, Aberdovey CC, GC and the Outward Bound Centre and was going to cost some £70 and hopefully would be completed later in October.

He also thought that it may be useful to revisit the site to look again at the missing link.

PR was grateful for this information as it was long overdue as this was a popular route down to the village and used by a considerable number of students at the Outward Bound. The LAF had attended a site visit some three years ago to look at the link. It may be possible to connect this more safely to the centre and the Public Right of Way, but it would require some structures along about 70m on the south side of the road wall. Network Rail had offered some land for free, but was mostly a drop but this would be difficult as its difficult terrain to work in.

He would discuss this with the Outward Bound to get the latest information on this.

But the missing link was more difficult to achieve. He would report back.

HP thanked all members and Officers for their contributions this evening.

11. Date of Next Meeting - 13th December 2022

