

**Minutes of the Northern Snowdonia Local Access Forum Meeting
held on Monday 4th September 2023 at 5.45p.m
at Canolfan Prenteg**

Present - Members:	Mr Edwin Noble Mr Richard Williams Mr Mark Jones Mr Dafydd Gwyndaf Mr Tim Jones Mrs Maggi Barry	Mr David Firth Mr Robin Parry Mrs Fiona Davies Mr Arthur Davies Cllr Beca Roberts Mr Dafydd Jones
Officers / Speakers:	Peter Rutherford (SNPA) Simon Roberts (SNPA) Angela Jones (SNPA)	Rhian P Williams (SNPA) Simon Rogers (NT)
1. Apologies:	Mr John Gladston Mr Connor A Watt	Mr Paul Williams

PR announced that the Chair had been duly elected and this was Mr E Noble, and he would now hand over proceedings to EN.

EN thanked the members for their continued support. He announced that a Vice Chair was required and asked if anyone wished to nominate themselves this evening.

Mr David Firth was nominated and duly elected as Vice Chair.

EN asked that as there were some new members then a round table introduction may be useful.

Round table introductions.

EN thanked the members for this.

2. Previous Minutes

Approved

3. Matters Arising

i) Pen y Pass Cromlech footpath – Update

PR confirmed that the signage had been installed between the two points along with new way markers. The lower gate signage may need replacing to make the route direction clearer from the road. Signage had also been erected on the wall of the Pen Y Pass building to help guide people around to the path (descent).

It was unfortunate that there were still people using the road which was a long and dangerous journey even though a path was provided. They would continue to monitor this, but he was still at a loss to determine why people still continued to walk up and down the road when the Sherpa bus provided an excellent service from either point and enabled people to access the bus from the car parks either in Nant Peris or Llanberis.

MJ mentioned that possibly some of these were people bouldering or climbing from that point.

PR concurred that whilst there were some people bouldering and climbing the majority simply parked up for free in the laybys (including overnight) and either caught the bus or walked.

RP added that the laybys were frequently full by the early mornings.

AJ added that this was a classic case when people saw others parking up then they all tried to follow suite, and this was a common problem across the NP.

She had discussed this with Gwynedd Council and the bus company to make sure that they would stop when people flagged own a bus if there was capacity but that was not always the case as buses are frequently full at peak times and by the time they reached the Cromlech area and were unable to pick up any more passengers.

DG commented that this may be confusing for some walkers who failed to understand the situation and service provided.

TJ mentioned that he had counted 23 people walking on the road that very day and asked if it was possible to improve the signage lower down i.e. to place signage beforehand to make people more aware of the parking options in Nant Peris or Llanberis before they arrived at Cromlech.

MJ asked if it was possible to put the distance on the signage from Pen Y Pass on the as this may put people off from walking on the road.

PR commented that the new signage at PyP did have the distance, but the new Cromlech signage would not as it could deter people from walking the path upwards thinking that road was a shorter option – even though it was a similar distance.

On reflection the PyP signage may need to be moved slightly to a more visible position.

AJ added that if signage became too wordy or complex (and were legally required to be bi-lingual) then people simply did not absorb the messaging, so this was a difficult balancing act.

DF commented that unfortunately many people still did not realise or understand that there was a Park and Ride system in place. He cited the Highland Railway system where not all coaches were filled to capacity so as to allow for pick up's along the way. He suggested that the bus companies experimented with something similar to allow for Cromlech capacity.

He added that many people tried to flag down a bus but when the bus was full there was no option other than to drive past.

TJ made the point that many people he had seen that day were family groups.

AJ mentioned that there was a family ticket available for the bus and also a day ticket.

ii) **Page 3 CRoW access land liability for events.**

EN had raised a very interesting question at the last meeting. Principally did landowners lose their rights and protection for natural features afforded under the CRoW Act when charging people a fee for use of that access land for activities outside of the scheduled list of allowable activities on access land. Since that time PR had some communication with the NRW Officers and their legal advisors. The opinion was that if landowners made a charge (i.e. a contract) then they would lose their protection afforded by the CRoW Act. This would then fall back to their responsibility under Occupiers Liability.

It was important to make the distinction that use of any Rights of Way was by right and would remain unaffected this only applied to CRoW access land.

SR (NT). Commented that they had sought advice on this very issue and they had determined that they would not charge for organised events on their land but would only charge for the use of facilities on non-access land such as buildings or parking areas.

AD added that if a landowner did give consent then this would fall under their own liability.

PR added that organised events such as mountain running did not fall under the allowable activities under the CRoW Act for access land which had given rise to the question.

EN added that if consent was given even without payment then they were still liable.

PR added that in such an instance then they would need to say 'at their own risk'.

MJ added that the NRW charged for events on their land.

PR commented that this was probably for use of hard facilities in a similar way to the NT, but he would inquire further with the NRW on how this operated.

4. Correspondence
None

5. Update on Warden Section North area – Simon Roberts Acting Senior Warden

SR informed the members that the summer had been very busy with the section undertaking various works and projects.

In the Betws area the local Area Warden had been busy undertaking Public Rights of Way maintenance works within the Conwy Area – as part of our Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Conwy Council. This included new gates, stiles, and way

markers with some installed by our own footpath teams. They had also been undertaking drainage works in several locations.

Our other Warden was undertaking similar works in the Penmachno, Bro Garmon, Ysbyty Ifan and Trefriw areas.

In the Snowdon area the two Wardens had undertaken various works - including contributing to work on a well-being community garden in Beddgelert. Teams had also been undertaking additional drainage works on the lower slopes of Yr Wyddfa and works in Cwm Marchnad – Rhys Ddu to improve surfacing, drainage and some gate replacements on the bridleway leading to the forestry plantation and the Llyn Llywelyn area (eventually linking to Cwm Pennant). Some vegetation clearance and maintenance had been undertaken on Llywbr Ianos – the NP`s all ability route adjacent to the Cwellyn car park.

Works re still outstanding to replace the diverter fence on the Rhyd Ddu (zig zags) path – *this is delayed due to the lack of availability of the helicopter.*

Some of the Voluntary Wardens had ben tasked with replacing roundel signs of Lon Gwyrfai.

To assist the landowner`s new signs had also been erected in the Cwm Cloch area due to the number of cycles using Lon Gwyrfai and to try to reduce their speed in the farm and rail crossing area.

Other works included erecting new no information signs in Llyniau Mymbyr alluding to the SSSI and no barbeques and gates and way markers is ongoing in Cwm Pennant.

The Wardens had also been helping with some safety cover and marshalling for Ras Y Wyddfa.

Unusually there has been several incidents of graffiti which has appeared this summer and the volunteer wardens have been issued with graffiti removal spray.

There is currently a trial underway where the bins in the Cwellyn car park have been removed and visitors are being asked to take their litter home with them. This is ongoing and will be monitored and evaluated.

The voluntary Wardens have been patrolling Yr Wyddfa every weekend throughout the season giving information to the public and also picking up litter.

DG mentioned that the Dragons Back race which was beginning this week did have some issues last year as it clashed with the sheep gathering on the Carneddau. He asked what the outcome had been.

PR stated that it was unfortunate that the two activities occurred on the same date each year and last year the visibility was very poor, giving rise to difficulties with the movement of sheep and that some had been missed early on.

He had discussed this with both parties with a view to get them together to discuss this so as to try and avoid any issues. There have been amicable discussions, and both were amenable to slightly changing their timings for this year to avoid conflicting activities. They would monitor this but generally this high

profile 6-day race down the length of Wales is very professionally organised and had gone well this year by all accounts.

PR for clarity mentioned that the SLA was an acronym for the **Service Level Agreement** (SLA) between Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) and Snowdonia National Park. Whereby the National Park undertakes basic maintenance works on the Public Rights of Way within the Conwy area of the NP – this is in the region of 640km and is mostly public footpaths and some bridleways. This work includes replacing stiles (with gates wherever practicable), fencing, drainage, surfacing and signage. These only included contractor costs and materials and not our manpower. Currently this stands at £15k per annum and after considerable work by the Wardens concerned this has resulted in much improved network in the area and a good working relationship with CCBC.

There is not currently agreement with Gwynedd Council (GC) regarding the management of Rights of Way although they were working on a Memorandum of Understanding, but it was unlikely that any funding would be forthcoming. Currently the NP assists GC with *de facto* responsibility for many upland routes and also for our own promoted routes. But they did work closely together on many issues.

EN thanked SR for his Warden Section update.

DF wished to make thank you NP for taking the initiative in terms of social media and how proactive they had been in discouraging misinformation about the NP.

AJ mentioned that the term large `digital footprint` had appeared in the press recently. Although generally a positive thing a high degree of specific media overexposure for some sites such as Nant Gwynant can be potentially damaging to sites that are already congested at peak periods.

AD (informed us that he was still awake). He mentioned that the litter and waste issue was an ongoing problem for us all as people still leave everything behind them which was disappointing.

6. Pen y Pass and Pen y Gwryd signage

PR mentioned that figures from our counters showed that the path was now carrying some 7000 people per annum (one way) which had resulted in a significant reduction in the number of people using the roadway from Pen y Gwryd.

They were now minded to make minor alterations to the current signage in Pen Y Pass to make the messaging a little easier to interpret from the car park and also add a new sign in Pen y Gwryd showing a directional arrow and gate which more clearly indicated the route ascent to Pen Y Pass. He showed some of the existing signs.

It was also decided, as a trial, to remove the distance value from the signs so as not to discourage people.

In general this route had worked well although some pitching works remained.

MJ asked if it was worth considering applying a name to these to separate the two routes. Remove the words Pen Y Pass and make it either Miners and/ or the Pyg.

FJ mentioned that in her conversations with walkers they frequently only asked for Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon and not Pen Y Pass.

SR added that in his conversations many in Pen Pass referred to Pen Y Pass as the starting point for both routes.

PR stated that these were both very interesting observations, but they would monitor this and if changes were required then they would do so.

AJ added that the bus services were also titled as to Pen Y Pass and she thought this more familiar to people.

SR commented that it was also noteworthy that many people arriving at Pen Y Pass without prebooking were advised by parking staff to use the car parks in Nant Peris or Pen Y Gwryd and head back on the bus marked Pen Y Pass. So he thought this more familiar.

TJ added that Pen Y Pass may be more suitable.

AJ mentioned that none of the wording was easy but with an i before Pen Y Pass it would require a mutation in the Welsh version which would further complicate things in terms of wording.

7. Perspective on Access in Eryri from the National Trust – Simon Rogers

SR (NT) thanked the members for the opportunity to update them on the access work of the NT.

He explained that the Fishermans ladders in the Rhiw Goch on the Afon Lledr (Crimea area) had now been removed but had taken some time to organise and action.

They had also closed off the entrance to what is called Tin Can Gulley in Ogwen which is adjacent to the entrance path to Cwm Idwal. This was due to a rockfall and as this was partly on NT land, and they had closed this area until safety works could be undertaken.

This has been done on their part of the property, but the lower part of the gully is in the ownership of the YHA. This is an expensive process but hopefully the YHA will address the issue in their portion soon. In the meantime it has been agreed that the temporary signage will remain in place.

PR added that as CROW access land it was important to get this scraped back and to make safe as soon as possible as it was tempting for walkers to access this route.

Cllr BR asked if it was possible to put a sign in at the other end entrance as they had walked to this recently on the way down only to have to turn back to the normal descent from Idwal.

SR (NT) stated that there had been signs erected but they had been removed by someone once again. They would review this.

The footpath team has recently repaired the bridge abutments and entrance slabs on the Cwm Idwal river outlet bridge this summer – this was made easier due to the low water levels.

The Beddgelert riverside all ability walk required some minor works following a couple of falls recently on a simple trip hazard which has now been rectified.

There has been a recent large series of heli lifts - to some degree they have been in the same situation as the National Park waiting for a heli lift slot but they had been successful and had enough stone in place for this year and some for next year.

This included south ridge of Snowdon (Cwm Llan), Cwm Tryfan, Cwm Ffynnon Lloegr and a couple of other locations.

EN thanked SR (NT) for his time and the update.

8. Update on the Parking and Transport Plan – Angela Jones

AJ wished to update the members on three main points this evening.

Pen Y Pass and the pre booking (beginning of April to end of September) parking arrangements were now in their third year of operation and there is another year of the current contract to run. This was currently £20 per day per car. They do see this arrangement as having been highly successful in alleviating many parking issues in Pen Y Pass.

However, as a public body they are now required, as part of a review, to conduct a cost benefit analysis and explore the options to move forward on this. Having no barrier does increase costs to this as it has to be manned by security staff constantly. Those discussions are ongoing.

The messages about illegal parking seem to have sunk into the public psyche with far fewer people attempting to actually park on the road in that area – most are now handed a ticket, and some have been towed away.

She mentioned that the Sherpa service had grown again this year with a new service from Morfa Bychan via Porthmadog to Pen Y Pass and a 20-minute regular service to and from Pen Y Pass to/from Llanberis and Nant Peris. These arrangements will hopefully continue into next season.

There have been issues with some local users of the Pen Pass Car park in that they could not use the car park later on in the evening to go for a short run or walk even though many people had gone leaving spaces empty, so they have initiated a short stay session after the core hours.

They were still working at solutions in Nant Gwynant to try to alleviate some of the roadside parking which is causing severe problems at peak times and is subject to a lot of complaints. Most of the issue is caused by people wanting to access the

Watkin path pools. GC have now agreed to have yellow lines along that length near Pont Britania and the café area but have yet to be installed.

It is currently clearway, but they were hopeful that the new bus service from the Porthmadog area will improve matters once this service becomes more widely known.

PR commented that anecdotally he had noted less people around that area this season albeit it was still busy but not as much as post Covid.

AJ commented that the monitoring figures did indicate that the numbers for the Watkin Path had doubled in recent years but some nonempirical data indicated that 50% of the visitors only accessed the waterfalls with only the other 50% climbing the route to the top¹.

MJ suggested that it may be useful to install a counter above the falls to gather some statistics.

PR commented that it was interesting that when the NT moved the line to the woodland they had then installed an additional counter. Between the two they indicated that whilst most people ascend the path through the woodland they descend on the old track which was easy to do. Finding a fairly low-level location for another counter slightly further up near Gladstone rock was more problematic as it was difficult to get a pinch point.

DF mentioned that he was pleased that something was being done to alleviate to issues in Nant Gwynant and the double yellow lines but feared that this may cause displacement and move the issue further down the valley. In Beddgelert itself the Caernarfon road saw a great deal of parking leading outside the village due to the restricted parking.

In the Ogwen area the partnership is very strong with monthly meetings and includes Trunk Roads, both Gwynedd and Conwy Councils highways representatives, the National Trust, Traffic Wales, the NRW and local councillors. A great deal of cooperation relies on this Ogwen partnership and lately Bws Ogwen shuttle which runs from Bethesda to Ogwen.

There is also the new T10 bus service which runs between Bangor and Corwen every two hours, but it was a little early to estimate what effect this was having on parking and walkers taking advantage of the service – but there is evidence that more people are using this service from Bethesda to Ogwen cottage.

AD added that there may now be a tender going out for an hourly T10 service at peak times.

The NP has contributed a new parking ticket machine to the Football club to enable them to use their car park to generate an income from this as this is close to a convenient bus stop and provides an alternative car park.

There are lessons to be learned and changes to make but things are certainly improving across the board.

¹ The Watkin Path monitoring figures indicate around 57,000 for 2022. The Watkin path is also considered one of the hardest routes to ascend yr Wyddfa.

Traffic Wales have also conducted a signage survey in the area, and they are formulating a plan to improve all roadside signage in the area.

PR asked what this would entail as an end product.

AJ stated that this would ensure consistency of what people would read in terms of road signs. This would be Eryri wide.

AD asked what the legal position was regarding double yellow lines if people park on the highway.

AJ stated that GC had said that they would enforce the yellow lines once in but if parked off road away from the lines then they would not be fined for parkin off road as long as they are not on the yellow lines.

DG mentioned that number of mobile homes that can be seen every evening and all that entails.

AJ circulated around the table the NP`s advice note for campervans and motorhomes and that the recognised sites are listed on the pamphlet and are also available on the NP website.

RP mentioned that the lower Padarn pools area was always full of campervans and motorhomes each evening.

PR mentioned that GC are interested in creating some sites across the county – `Aires` for overnight camping by these vehicles. He thought that Llanberis was included in this mix.

TJ commented that if this was allowed then GC would have to police this in an official manner i.e. waste, litter, period of stays etc. with proper enforcement.

MJ added that he was a camper van owner and there was information that was shared by the various campervan and motorhome users` groups including all available sites.

Cllr BR commented that it was cheap to use a site rather than park up for free which was possibly unfair to formal campsite providers.

9. Eryri National Park`s Recreation Strategy – Peter Rutherford

PR stated that this final version was now going to Management Team with all the changes recommended by the Performance and Resources Committee and many other informal stakeholder discussions including LAF members informal feedback which had been very useful. Once this was approved it can then go out to the LAF members and other formal stakeholders for any observations and hopefully to launch in January 2024.

Although closely aligned to the Management Plan the second half of the document contained separate activity statements rather than being filled with bland collective text.

Some of the more recent changes included the use of motorhomes as a form of passive recreation, wild camping and changes to some names and statistics following the 2022 figures. *Cader Idris in particular had seen a substantial increase in numbers and was now in the region of 75,000.* He had also been discussing the cycling content with Cycling UK.

TJ commented that he thought that the wild camping issue should be included in the Strategy then at least it would enable the NP to convey the right messages to those that do have consent and make the distinction between fly camping and the ethos of true wild camping. I.e. leave trace and low impact.

PR commented that the wild camping information on the NP website had been removed temporarily following Covid due to the problems that fly camping had caused. This information was now back on their website.

MJ added that the leave no trace element was one of the most important factors.

EN commented that wild camping was not a prescribed activity on access land under the CRow Act.

PR confirmed that this but if landowners were happy for this to occur with consent then the NP would recommend that `best practice` was required at all times. In terms of providing information – Gdpr² regulations had complicated this as the NP could no longer pass on landowner details without consent. It was unfortunate that post Covid certain people's behaviour had reflected badly on those who fully understood the ethos wild camping.

He would circulate this soon to members (and stakeholders) for observations and comments.

This will run from 2024 – 2029.

10. Recommended Agenda items for next meeting –

- i) NP Draft Recreation Strategy
- ii) Traws Eryri route – update from Cycling UK/NRW
- iii) Role of Access Forums
- iv) All Wales Coastal path update from GC
- v) Changes to two local RoW

11. Any Other business

i) Taith Eryri Way.

PR announced that this route had now been launched officially and the NP was broadly supportive but some months prior to the launch he had indicated to the NRW and Cycling UK, that there were certain sections along this route within the NP where sufficient higher rights (i.e. as bridleways) did not exist and it was up to them to discuss these with the local highways authorities with a view to rectify these anomalies to allow cycles in the long term. Additionally they could not now

² Gdpr - General Data Protection Regulations. The Data Protection Act 2018 controls how your personal information is used by organisations, businesses, or the government. Meaning mandatory compliance.

expect the NP or local authorities to lend resources to this project to resolve these issues as complaints (not of our making) would fall to the NP, Gwynedd, and Conwy.

He would ask Cycling UK to come back to the LAF in December to explain the latest position on this.

TJ recommended that we invite NRW – ML to represent them.

PR would ask them to attend.

DG had observed the launch and was aware that some areas did not have rights – he cited Cwm Feigl as an example which was a footpath only.

One race had taken lately using this route which was dangerous to pedestrians and there was no notice or signs that this had taken place. He was concerned that de facto use of these sections may cause problems unless they are resolved. He was also aware of some anomalies in the Cwm Penmachno areas.

SR (NT) added that the launch of this route had also come as a surprise and disappointment to the NT as parts of the route went through their land and they had only heard of this by way of a magazine article.

PR stated that if Cycling UK attended in December then we may get updated information on this route development.

ii) Balloons and Lanterns website advice

PR mentioned that the information relating to balloons and lanterns had been added to the NP website (taken from their Events Guidelines). The information being that the NP did not approve or encourage their use for obvious reasons in particular the potential as fire risks and risks to ingestion by stock.

DG had some experience with cows trying to eat burst balloons and they were inherently dangerous to stock if ingested.

He also mentioned that some signage had also been left out by a race organiser.

PR asked DG to give him any information on this specific issue to enable him to discuss this with that particular organiser. The requirements in terms of signage was widely known by event's organisers per se and most professional organisers understood this. I.e. signage was to be removed immediately following any even and not left out.

iii) RP mentioned relating to access to water that there was an invasive species - *Lagarosiphon major* (curly waterweed) in Llyn Padarn and although beyond the NP boundary he asked what could be done this in terms of biosecurity to help stop the spread of this highly invasive weed.

If people travelled from lake to lake particularly with equipment such as inflatable paddleboards then the potential for transference for invasive species was high and information on the NP website would be useful.

TJ mentioned that the NRW did have a code of conduct for water users which included useful information about bio security.

PR added that the NP had information on sites such as Llyn Tegid – similar to the information boards in Llyn Padarn and was also within the pages of our Events Guidelines but he would check to see what could be done to add this to the NP general website information based on what RP has said.

MJ suggested that they wish to get Canoe Wales involved in some way to specifically mention in their newsletter an article highlighting the invasive species issue in Llyn Padarn. Although he appreciated this would not reach many paddleboard users.

PR would mention this to Canoe Wales and see if they could assist. It may also be useful to review any information on bio security on the Upper Conwy at the same time.

SR (NT) added that it may be useful to work together on this issue.

TJ commented that it was important that the messaging was consistent across the sector wherever it was. If signs are wordy then QR codes may be useful.

DJ mentioned that whilst the Ysbyty Ifan model did work quite well with 8 out of 10 being responsible users – but there were still some problems occasionally with some groups including changing in public view, entering at the wrong location, making noise, and filling the public car park.

PR suggested that we also discuss these with Canoe Wales if necessary to ask them to promote good practice at the Ysbyty Ifan site.

12. Date of next meeting – 4th December 2023

EN thanked all the members and Officers for their contribution this evening.

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