

**Minutes of the Northern Snowdonia Local Access Forum Meeting
held on Monday 10th June at 5.45p.m
at Tyn y Coed Hotel, Capel Curig.**

Present - Members:

Mr Edwin Noble	Mr David Firth
Mr Richard Williams	Mr John Gladston
Mr Mark Jones	Mrs Fiona Davies
Mr Dafydd Gwyndaf	Mr Arthur Davies
Mr Tim Jones	Mr Paul Williams
Mrs Maggi Barry	Mr Dafydd Jones

Officers / Speakers:

Peter Rutherford (SNPA)	Rhian P Williams (SNPA)
Bethan W Jones (SNPA)	

1. Apologies: Mr Connor A Watt.

PR announced that CW had stood down as a member and that we would now require a replacement from within the recreational sector.

Under the regulations the LAF can co-opt members if required but any applications would need to be ratified by the Authority.

He would make inquiries about perspective candidates.

2. Previous Minutes

Approved.

3. Matters Arising

i) Sustainable Farming Scheme – response from the Access Forum

EN stated that this was an agenda item 8 and will be discussed later.

ii) Page 3 CRoW access land liability for events.

Nothing further to add following previous discussion

iii) Event in Ogwen.

There has been difficulties in relation to one event which had taken place in Ogwen at the end of last season. The NP, NT and some NT tenants had met together with the organisers and we expressed our views on what had transpired and this was considered to be a poor performance overall.

They had agreed to rectify any damage, make amends, and reconsider their logistics and activities.

PR stated that this has been very disappointing and reflected badly on other events which were well organised and took place without incident. This was made worse as both the NP and NT jointly had meet with organisers many months prior

to the event to explain our position and what was expected in terms of organisation.

TJ asked what the specific issues had been.

PR replied that this related to people climbing over walls, fences, poor signage, people lost and some miscommunication and poor stewarding.

JG mentioned that he had received complaints from Llanberis about noise and lights in Victoria Terrace area late at night/early morning.

PR observed that the standard advice for events of any sort using the Llanberis path was that whilst transiting through residential areas in Llanberis, especially late at night, then organisers are expected to mention this in their briefings and that noise and lights should be kept to an absolute minimum in late hours and the same for descents in early mornings.

He asked JG if he had examples so they could have conversation with the relevant organisers.

JG mentioned that the tanoy system was a very early start in Llanberis which was noisy.

PR commented that this was on Gwynedd Councils land, they are in control of these activities, and they had certain rules which people had to follow as part of their field hire. He would mention this to the Gwynedd Events team.

He added that communication with landowners was important even when using Rights of Way as certain activities may be planned such as gathering, moving stock, fencing or other land management. So it was important that all eventualities were considered and the NP made these points very clear to organisers from the onset.

DG mentioned that ITERA was holding an event via Cwm Penmachno next month and runners may be there late at night or early morning. He had been notified by letter.

PR mentioned that they had communicated with the NP but this was only about 150 runners in total and based on previous years this event had usually gone well and there had been no issues.

- iv)** P3 PR mentioned that he had put in some words about the Hobhouse report which led to the NP 1949 Act. There is an original copy of the map and report in his office (fiercely guarded) if anyone wishes to see this at any time he would make it available. It was a very interesting document (well beyond its time) and still relevant today.
- v)** PR mentioned that following the presentation of Traws Eryri Trail by Keiran Foster Cycling UK he had inserted their mountain biking grading system for members information.

4. Correspondence

- i) Letter to Gwynedd Council Highways - speed limit Pen y Pass
- ii) Response letter from Cyngor Gwynedd to the above letter.

PR had received a response from Gwynedd Highways about the speed limit in PyP. They had indicated that they were not minded changing this but did recommend that we raise this with the Snowdonia Partnership. The letter indicated that there may be changes to legislation and funding components in the near future and there may be an opportunity to review this again.

PR stated that this was disappointing as the situation was not good with so many cars, buses, people of foot generally and also back and forth to the YHA. He has now passed this onto the Partnership Officers for a discussion with a view to adding to the debate.

5. Eryri Recreation position statement

PR announced that this document was now available to all on the website. The title had been changed to Position Statements (following a recommendation from our consultant) and he was thankful to members for all their input and suggestions over the last 2 years in the making. Hard copies were available this evening and electronic versions are also available.

TJ mentioned that the Authority had made some suggestions. And had recommended that wild camping be included along with references the wild camping code. He did appreciate that fly camping was problematic rather than wild camping per se by those that understood the true ethos of this activity and how it should be conducted.

JG mentioned that there was some confusion in some quarters about the term `wild camping` and what this actually meant. Remote camping may be more pertinent.

MJ added that this was difficult and making sure that more people understood the notion of wild camping but appreciated that they were difficult messages to convey.

6. Countryside and Rights of Way Act – Dedication of Eryri Woodland in the ownership of the National Park. (Section 16 of the CRoW Act)

PR announced that several years ago the NRW had requested the NP`s Wales to review their forestry holdings with a view to dedicating those as `access land` under Section 16 of the CRoW Act.

Although brought to the LAF in the past – he had re assessed this recently with a view to dedicating 4 of the NP woodlands. He showed maps of – Brynbrethynnau (Capel Curig), Coed Hafod (Betws Y Coed), Farchynys (Bont Ddu) and Abergwynant (Dolgellau).

Dedicating woodlands such as forest was entirely up to the landowners - these four were freehold properties of the NP. Dedicating would reduce the NP`s

potential liability for trees and other natural features although this would not alleviate responsibilities for known issues or dangers (under Occupiers Liability). He mentioned that all state owned forestry freehold had been dedicated as access land in 2002 and was now within the remit of the NRW.

There was a formal process to this and was also subject to land charges but he thought this worthwhile. Based on what members opinion was then his next step was to take a paper to the Management Team – then the Authority. Dedication was in perpetuity.

He asked the members if they had any thoughts on this.

PW asked if these areas were bounded by fences so it would be clear where the boundary lines were for people and to avoid confusion or straying onto other non-access land.

PR stated that this was an important consideration and the NP woodlands were all bounded by fences.

If there was any third party interests then he would have to make inquires with others and as it has not been done by the NP before it is unclear as to how complex or uncomplicated this may prove to be.

TJ asked if this required us to wait for the next CRoW mapping review.

PR stated that this was an interesting observation. The CRoW Act dictated that CRoW maps should be reviewed every ten years. There was one in 2013. However, the 2023 review has been put back by WG to 2029. To encompass any new legislation that may appear in between. Given that there is no mapping process then it was difficult to see how any new additions or deletions can be added or subtracted on the CRoW maps (and subsequently OS maps).

The 2013 review was a considerable body of work for the NRW or work and given the stability of the CRoW Act and access land as it was it was thought by the NP that it may be unnecessary to go through that exercise again.

The NP had recommended via the Access Reform Groups (ARAG) that reviews are no longer required and that we should accept the status quo (the amount of access land as it is) and let LAF`s consider locally additions or deletions as they appear on individual cases based on the original criteria of being `unimproved land` or by dedication.

In terms of the dedication of the woodlands by the NP then PR was looking for support from the LAF members to advance this.

AD asked if tis would affect any existing RoW within these areas.

PR stated that dedicating areas did not affect PRow inside those woodlands and they would remain unaffected.

EN asked if members would support this.

Members agreed to support this.

7. Warden Section North Area - Update

BWJ introduced herself as the Senior Warden for the north area of the NP and was responsible for the Wardens within 5 separate areas in the north of the NP.

She showed slides of the areas covered by her team and what work had been undertaken by them.

Alan Prichard covered Carneddau and Ogwen

Ioan Davies – Nant Conwy area

Alun Gethin Jones, Ffion Parker and one additional season for Yr Wyddfa. This area also covers Beddgelert, Nant Gwynant, Nant Peris down to Llanberis, Rhyd Ddu and Cwellyn.

BWJ herself also covers Cwmystradllyn and Cwm Pennant.

Simon Roberts covers – Maentwrog and Ffestiniog.

If members wished to contact their area wardens at any time then they would be more than welcome to do so to discuss any access issues.

The service has always been the eyes and ears on the ground and work with others to resolve issues such as broken signage, furniture and basic maintenance when they can. They also work both with Gwynedd and Conwy Councils when required.

Additional slides showed works carried out by the Wyddfa teams since the spring – work on the Miners track – cleaning drainage culverts and re surfacing in many places up the Llyn Llydaw.

They also work with the NP communications department to put relevant information on our website and also signage on the ground, such as dogs on leads advice, route information and safety advice.

The Warden service also organise monthly walks for the public and rotate this between north and south of the NP.

JG asked of it was possible for a blind person to join some of the monthly walks. He also asked if there were any statistics to show any increases in use of the outdoors by disabled people. He appreciated that these were difficult statistics to measure.

PR replied that the Tramper use was a suitable measure for this and usage had increased over the last 5-8 years which was beneficial to the sector. The take up on our NP run well-being activities had also increased significantly post Covid. He would ask the Well Being and Volunteer Officer to attempt a precis of these figures.

BWJ added that they would assess what could be done to accommodate this person. In the past there had been a link between the Society for the Blind and she was sure that through our Volunteering and Well Being Officer this could be rekindled if required in some form.

PR added that he would discuss this with the Officer.

BWJ continued. There are also Voluntary Wardens who patrol the main routes on Yr Wyddfa and collect litter. It was their remit to give information and help inform the walking public about the routes and safety. They also assist with manning the information trailer and van which are rotated between different routes around the periphery of Yr Wyddfa.

There are lots of other works and projects undertaken by the Wardens – way markers, surfacing, gating, across the whole area.

She also explained that they are also piloting a new PRow management IT system which allows field operators and the office to record issues, store and look up PRow information by laptop by Wardens in the field and to handle complaints.

MJ asked if the Voluntary Wardens were part of the Caru Eryri scheme.

BJW replied that the Voluntary Wardens had been in place since 2012/13 starting with an original 10 and by today there are around 50 patrolling mostly patrolling the main paths on Yr Wyddfa over the weekends and Bank Holidays. The Caru Eryri volunteers are tasked, since the end of Covid, and in conjunction with Cymdeithas Eryri – Snowdon Society to collect litter, undertake some basic path maintenance, some ecological work and also give advice to the public.

MJ asked how the Trumper vehicle was advertised.

BWJ stated that all information pertaining to these vehicles for use by disabled and less abled users was via a booking system was available of the NP website.

PR confirmed that there was an advanced booking system of 4 weeks to allow adequate time to fit into the Wardens work plans and move these vehicles to site if necessary.

MJ mentioned that the Outdoor Partnership was keen to promote more accessibility in the outdoors and asked if they could help advertise this.

PR stated that there was one machine in Forest Holidays in Beddgelert which was used daily and the other in the Warden centre in Dolgellau, which was used weekly, or more on the Mawddach Trail. There is also a Da Vinci four wheeler which was intended for younger disabled or less abled persons (which is currently under repair).

He added that what was most useful about the Trumper¹ (which is trade name) is that it has reversible controls so can be adapted quickly to persons who may be paralysed on one side such as stroke victim and this gives users a greater sense of independence. It also means that carers do not have to push or pull any equipment. This can be used on many outdoor tracks which are not necessarily built to all ability standards. Lon Gwyrfaï was a good example of this.

There was also a set of disabled route videos available on the NP website. this allowed users to decide on what was suitable for them and not what the NP prescribed. He would show the members these at the next meeting.

DF asked if the walks were advertised.

¹ Trumper vehicle – is a battery powered all terrain four wheeled road legal disabilities vehicle produced by Beamer Ltd.

BWJ answered that the walks were advertised on the NP website.

DF mentioned that there had been a recent piece on radio Wales about a test of a new off road vehicle on Yr Wyddfa and was the NP involved in this.

PR replied that this group had been in communication with him. Although a new design he had outlined the difficulties that ascending Yr Wyddfa with a battery powered vehicle presents regardless of its unique all-terrain ability. Our Volunteer and Well Being Officer had been out with them at their first attempt and they had found that battery capacity was an issue and for their ascent they needed to carry additional batteries which was difficult.

This year he had received a number of requests from people wishing to ascend Yr Wyddfa in wheelchairs and some thought this entirely achievable which is not the case. There are many difficulties and a great deal of logistical support is required to achieve success. One wheelchair required a team of at least 10 to assist carrying ramps, ropes etc. The Backup Trust undertakes this on Yr Wyddfa annually with several wheelchair users and each one has their own team but their organisation is well versed in this and they are to be commended for what they achieve.

JG added that in terms of the users there were other dynamics for disabled people and their helpers to consider such as hyperthermia (heat stress) – hypothermal (cold stress) or other factors such as exhaustion that may affecting long term illnesses. These should all be part of their risk assessment.

PR mentioned that there was no charge for a Trampler but they may need to apply a charge in the future to cover maintenance costs.

PW asked if the Wardens areas information was available to the Public so people could know who to contact.

BWJ stated that these were on the website but would confirm this.

EN mentioned that one slide showed a ladder stile and he thought that they were no longer supplying or installing these.

BWJ replied that the NP was committed to least restrictive options and `Miles Without Stiles` philosophy to which all NP`s in the UK had signed up to. However, this was down to the location and terrain. In flat or mildly undulating ground then certainly gates or kissing gates would be considered as replacements but in some upland areas it was not practicable. Each route required an assessment based on its merits.

PR added that EN has raised an important point. There was no longer a British Standard for latter stiles but as BWJ had said it was dictated by the terrain and in some instances – such as high terrain, it was not possible to install step overs or gates. Boundaries were also very important issues and any changes needed to carefully consider this.

ED thanked BWJ for her time and her informative update.

8. Sustainable Farming Scheme

PR explained that this had not be a straightforward exercise as replies could only be made via the online questionnaire. It was disappointing that there was no references to access *per se* so all answers were inserted into the last open question as bullet points based on what members and the subgroup had recommended. He was aware that some members had also responded as individuals.

It was disappointing that access and Rights of Way and access land were not given the attention they deserved within the consultation which was the case with the previous consultation. However, he felt that the group had made some important points (paper included as item 8). He went over the various points within the response.

9. Co-option of new member from the cycling sector.

PR – as previously mentioned the membership was now missing a member from this sector and to maintain the balance of the Forum he was minded to try to get a mountain biking representative. He would make inquiries to that end.

10. Recommended Agenda items for next meeting –

i) Site visit to Port Penrhyn new coastal path section recently completed by Gwynedd Council. PR thought this an interesting one to look at although slightly out of our area.

Agreed – PR would try to organise this late August or September and liaise with the Gwynedd Coastal Officer.

11. Any Other business

i) TJ mentioned that the Cynllyn Rheoli Parc Genedlaethol – the Eryri National Park Plan was due to be reviewed next year and this needed to be in people's mindset at an early stage. It was gratifying that it was written following extensive consultation with users, local communities and many other organisations which had worked well.

ii) PR mentioned that they had amended their drone advice recently. This stated that flying time must be kept to a minimum and not to disturb other people's sense of enjoyment, peace, and tranquillity. Yr Wyddfa was problematic but the CAA² rules applied equally to all drone users – over 250g. *PR was frequently told that their drones were 249g which was annoying. His advice was always to keep to the CSA rules regardless.*

Any commercial filming on NP property required a licence including copa Wyddfa summit. However, if requests were made for commercial filming on private land

² Civil Aviation Authority – the CAA produce guidance for all drone users and users are expected to register and obtain a user ID for drones over 250g. The CAA are reviewing their current advice.

they would always advise the operator to contact the relevant landowner. In terms of the NT property – no filming is allowed on any land without consent.

JG asked if the NT had their own bylaws.

PR replied that the NT had their own Parliamentary act which allowed them to do many things including presumably apply bylaws although he couldn't be certain about their drone rules. But inquiries the NP receive for NT areas are passed onto the relevant NT officer who deals with all their commercial filming requests centrally.

MJ asked if the NP itself used drones.

PR replied that the NP did have its own drone, which was used for various purposes, mostly ecological woodland and sometimes path surveys.

TJ observed that if bylaws were applied it was questionable how many people would adhere to any rules and appreciated the logistics and resources required trying to police places such as Yr Wyddfa.

PR added that this was complicated by having frequent low flying aircraft activities in the area and drones clearly posed a danger if misused.

iii) PR had recently received an e mail from Rob Taylor giving an update on what was a Private Members Bill on animal welfare which has contained details of dogs in the countryside. Unfortunately, this had been dropped by Westminster as indicated in RT email. This was disappointing given all the information that RT had fed into the Parliamentary Committees (this was a Private Members Bill). So it was now a wait and see game and what would emerge following the election. RT will update us if anything does appear.

PR read out RT email.

DJ confirmed that this had been a private members Bill - proposed by Ben Lake MP from Ceredigion. The farming unions also found this disappointing but there were powerful contra lobbies to this.

TJ added that as a volunteer Warden in the Foel Famau area he had experienced many incidents where dogs off leads in areas with stock.

FD added that frequently many incidents were not reported included those Yr Wyddfa and there were not a priority for the Police.

PW mentioned that following the election potentially there were some organisations seeking more access in the countryside and if this was the case then certainly this required changes to rules for dogs and other antisocial activities that currently occur.

TJ confirmed that this issue had been discussed by the WG Minister and the NP Chairs and Chief Executives (today) and that they had made the point that if any new rights were being considered then this required additional (legal) responsibilities.

PW added that whatever came forth it would need to be strong legislation.

TJ confirmed that the WG had devolved powers for this if necessary and there may be a greater chance for change.

EN asked MB as a representative of the Ramblers what their view was on additional access.

MG replied that if any additional rights were brought forward then this should bring additional responsibilities.

PR commented that he was unsure of what additional access meant. 66% of the Eryri NP landmass was already `access land`. We have 1800km of PRow and an All Wales Coastal Path. So it was difficult to see what additional access could be.

TJ commented that potentially this was access to water in some guise.

PR commented that the upper Conwy model installed by the NP had worked well since 2013 in managing canoeing. He had hoped that this model may be adopted by WG in some guise.

12. Date of next meeting –

14th October 2024

Secretary's Contact details

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EN thanked all for their contributions to this evening's meeting.

