

Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum
Unconfirmed Minutes of the 4th Meeting held at 2pm on Thursday 29th July 2021
Via Microsoft Teams Video Conference

Present

Ian Maberley (IM) – Chairman Richard Ball (RB) – Secretary Pam Bell (PB) Philippa Cherryson (PC)	Ian Jenkins (IJ) Karen Harris (KH) Hywel Morgan (HM) Kathryn Whitrow (KW)
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Observers

Inspector Gwyndaf Bowen	Dyfed Powys Police
PCSO Billy Dunne	Dyfed Powys Police
Jake White	Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
Rob Dingle	Offa's Dyke Trail Officer
Michael Smith	NRW
Paul Dann	NRW
Cllr Edwin Roderick	BBNPA Member
Phil O'Shea	Brecon Beacons Park Society
Judith Harvey (JH)	Warden Manager BBNPA
Eifion Jones (EJ)	Rights of Way Officer BBNPA
Lisa Lloyd	Rights of Way Assistant BBNPA
Paul Sinnadurai	Senior Ecologist (Climate Adaptation) BBNPA

1. Welcome and Apologies

IM welcomed members and observers to the meeting. Apologies were received from Dave Sharman, Steve Rayner, Ruth Pickvance, Denis Murphy and Colin Woodley. Stuart France joined the meeting for a short time but due to technical issues was unable to continue.

2. Confirmation of Minutes of 3rd Meeting held on 8th April 2021

The minutes were accepted, and the Chairman authorised to sign them as a correct record.

3. Matters arising not otherwise appearing on agenda

Access at Llyn Y Fan Fach

JH confirmed that there had been no change to the situation. HM said that it appeared that maintenance to the track had been carried out.

Waterfalls Area

James Lawrence provided the following written update.

- Coelbren – N.T are currently developing an overflow car park (free to use) for Henrhyd on their own land with funding from Powys CC via WG and we are providing directional highways signage and yellow lines to prevent fly parking and blockages in the lanes nearby.
- In partnership with NPT and Powys CC we are providing a small scale shuttle bus trail between Glynneath and Pontneddfechan in order to understand the viability of a service in the area. BBNPA have commissioned a survey of users to gather user feedback whilst NPT

have commissioned the service. Which will run at weekends from the 17th till the end of the school holiday/ August Bank Holiday weekend

- Proposed extension of yellow lines in the core of Waterfall Country between Comin y Rhos and Ystradfellte to help reduce fly parking and associated issues, whilst encouraging visitors to park in designated spaces, this is following residents feedback last summer.

KW confirmed that the new overflow carpark has opened on National Trust land, the work is complete, and the car park is operational which is great to see. There has been an increase in overnight camping in the car park, but this is not a huge issue.

KW said that she had received feedback from Pontneddfechan residents who are frustrated that there is still a lot of on road parking and that the take up of the park & ride facility is low. RB agreed to feed this back to James Lawrence.

4. Police response to off road motorcyclists

Inspector Gwyndaf Bowen and PCSO Billy Dunne from Dyfed Powys Police (DPP) joined the meeting to explain how DPP along with other neighbouring forces and the National Park Authority respond to illegal off-road vehicles.

IM thanked both Inspector Gwyndaf Bowen and PCSO Billy Dunne.

5. Update from NRW

Michael Smith provided members with a brief update on National Trails.

NRW is the responsible body for national trails in Wales. With an annual budget of £377,000 for the 2½ national trails in Wales. This includes funding a national trail officer for each of the trails, as well as funding for improvements and some maintenance on the trails, usually at a 75% contribution rate. The work on the ground is overseen by the National Trail Officers and the managing authorities.

This year there was a successful bid for a further £173,000 to complete a major Offa's Dyke Path project on the Denbighshire Moors. This brings the NRW grant expenditure on national trails to over half a million pounds in 2021-22, with additional funds provided by managing authorities.

Welsh Government have provided funding for Promotion and Marketing Actions in 2020-2022. £250,000 is being allocated over the two-year period. This has included employing a PR company, and assisting businesses in the vicinity of the national trails by creating a Business Toolkit, a Travel Trade Toolkit and associated webinar. It has also been helpful in promoting the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail in its 50th year, and in developing new circular walks from the national trails.

6. Offa's Dyke Path 50th Anniversary 1971 – 2021

IM welcomed Rob Dingle (RD), Offa's Dyke Path (ODP) Trail Officer, to the meeting. RD gave a presentation providing background information on the ODP and highlighting some of the events that have taken place and that are planned for 2021 to commemorate the occasion.

IM thanked both MS and RD for attending.

7. Welsh Raised Bogs LIFE Project, access at Waun Ddu, Llangattock

Jake White (JW), project officer for the LIFE Welsh raised bogs project, gave a presentation outlining the project and explaining the potential impacts to access of the proposed management of the raised bog at Waun Ddu, Llangattock. The bog area forms part of the common and to help improve conditions on the site the project proposes to install new stock fencing to restrict grazing. Part of the area is CROW access land and there is a public footpath crossing the site. Two new self-closing gates would be installed to allow continued access.

LAF Members unanimously agreed to support the Section 38 application for the installation of the new fence.

IM thanked JW for his presentation.

8. Current Access Improvement Projects in the BBNP

JH provided members with an update on the current projects that have been funded through a number of WG grants.

- 14 replacements bridges to be installed in 2021/22
- A stock of self-closing gates purchased to be installed in various locations supporting the ROWIP by replacing stiles with gates to make access easier.
- Compact tractor with hedge cutting arm, flail and woodchipper has been purchased which will allow access to narrower paths to clear vegetation and help with invasive species work.
- Resilient Heritage grant to improve and conserve the Bryn Oer Tram road by cutting back vegetation and improving drainage.
- Brilliant car parks funding to resurface some of the BBNPA owned car parks, marking out bays, interpretation and looking to install Pay and Display machines in some of the car parks.
- At Keepers Pond, Swim Wales are assisting with the zoning of the lake to make it safer for the increased number of visitors who wild swim, stand up paddle boarding etc. Under water profiling and water quality testing will also be carried out. Wheelchair access around Keeper's pond will be upgraded with resurfacing and a new bridge installed. Car parking bays will be marked including disabled parking bays.
- Climate resilient treescapes project deals with ash dieback on and around public rights of way and BBNPA owned land. Sam Harpur, Assistant Area Warden, is setting up a veteran tree scheme with the help of a small group of volunteers.
- Gunpowder Works – A landslide needs stabilising, tree extraction of a fallen tree from one of the historic buildings, improving access to the area along with work to the top bridge.
- Improvements to Cwmporth car park area and development of a report and improvement scheme for some of the Waterfall's trails.
- Meet and Greet Staff, on contract through Blue Dot adventurous activity provider, are providing support 7 days a week through the summer holidays with visitor management cover in locations throughout the National Park. Their help has been invaluable. Portable Toilets funded by Visit Wales and WG have been sited at various locations around the National Park.

IJ suggested that the authority should look at providing card less payment options for the Pay and Display car parks including the option to pay by phone. JH confirmed that this option would be investigated.

9. Brecon Beacons Visitor Sites and Opportunities

Paul Dann (PD), NRW Land Management Team Leader - Operational Services South Wales Region, provided members with an overview of the area covered and work carried out by the team of 3 NRW staff. The team manages the stewardship of the forest estate.

IM asked if the team work on weekends as this was when the forestry areas receive most visitors. PD confirmed that they work Monday to Friday but will occasionally work weekends for specific requests for assistance, such as from the police. PD acknowledged that the weekends see the most visitors which is why he provided funding for the BBNPA Meet and Greet and Stay Safe team. PD considered this more efficient and effective than one NRW member of staff trying to cover the vast area of NRW estate on the weekend.

IM thanks PD for attending the meeting.

10. The impact of tree planting on access in the National Park.

HM raised the subject of tree planting to make the LAF aware of the increase in Glastir Woodland Creation scheme applications with a number of farms in the West of the Park being purchased by Investors/corporations for tree planting. There may be rights of way in these areas and the proposals could have a visual impact on the landscape which could potentially deter tourism. There are also concerns about the impact on biodiversity and local communities, HM confirmed that he's not against tree planting, however, it needs to be the right tree in the right place.

JH confirmed that BBNPA ecologists advise on the type of trees being planted when consulted on the Glastir Woodland applications. If access land or rights of way are within the planting areas, then RB & EJ are consulted.

IJ agreed with Hywel that part of the LAF's remit is landscape and suggested that it should be addressed through the National Park Management Plan.

11. Signs in the Countryside

KW said that there had been lot of problems with dogs off leads and out of control, the dogs are not always chasing/biting sheep but still causing sheep to run. Is there any signage that can be placed in problem locations and is there any discussions around changes to the law which would require dogs to be kept on a fixed lead if around stock?

EJ responded, there were a lot of comments around the subject in the Welsh Governments green and white paper consultations so they may introduce legislation as part of the access reforms.

KW suggested that education was key.

12. National Park management plan stakeholder meeting update

KH provided the LAF with an update on the discussions at the stakeholder meeting held on 21st July.

13. Rights of way issues

EJ circulated an email to LAF members with details of the Monmouthshire CC consultation on the proposal to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order. The email contains a link to a questionnaire

which covers dog's on leads, dog fouling and restrictions on dogs in specific areas within Monmouthshire.

14. Any Other Competent Business

An update from Steve Rayner on the situation regarding access to the River Wye at Glasbury and Hay-on-Wye was circulated to LAF members.

Michael Smith asked that it be noted that NRW did not undertake the Habitats Regulations Assessment on behalf of Powys CC in relation to the previous Glas y Bont launching arrangements. But advice was offered in relation to their proposed 'code of conduct'.

Date of the next meeting

9th September 2021