

**Minutes of the South Snowdonia Local Access Forum Meeting  
held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at 5.45 pm  
At Canolfan Prysor, Trawsfynydd**

<b>Present – Members:</b>	Mr Hedd Pugh (Chair) Mr David Coleman Mr Gareth Roberts Mr Alan Norton Mr Alun Evans Mrs Lesley Amison	Cllr Eryl Jones Williams Mr Aled Thomas Mr Huw Roberts Mrs Lucinda Gibson Mr Delwyn Evans Cllr John Pugh Roberts
<b>Officers / Observers:</b>	Peter Rutherford (SNPA) Angela Jones (SNPA) Molly Lovatt (NRW)	Rhian P Williams (SNPA) Adam Daniel (SNPA) Euros Lake (Welsh Government)

*HP welcomed all members and officers attending the evenings' proceedings.*

*He asked EL (WG) just to explain his role within Welsh Audit.*

EL outlined the Wales Audit Office's main functions i) auditing the financial accounts of public bodies, and ii) auditing the performance of public bodies, which involves reviewing the implementation and compliance with various legislation, how public bodies secure value for money and ensure effectiveness, efficiency and economy.

This particular piece of work is guided by the Future Generations legislation and focuses on how the NPA is involving the public and stakeholders in its work. Given the Local Access Forum is one method of involving stakeholders, and EL thanked Members for welcoming him to the meeting in an observatory capacity. The audit team will also be speaking to officers and Members at the NPA to help inform the review.

<b>1. Apologies</b>	Mr Edmund Bailey Mr Geraint Rowlands Mr Alun Edwards	Mr Eifion Lewis Mr Andy Hall
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*EJW commented that AE had been appointed as one of the two Farm Safety Ambassadors by the Welsh Farm Safety Partnership.*

*HP stated that this was a very worthy cause.*

**2. Declaration of Interest**

None

### **3. Previous Minutes**

Approved

### **4. Matters Arising**

#### **i) Bryn Llestair Update**

PR informed the members that he had been in communication with the Head of the Aberdovey Outward Bound Centre and he in turn had been in communication with Network Rail concerning the bridge at Bryn Llestair. This was not a Public Right of Way and was not within the normal scope of 'legal access'. To complicate matters further the bridge was now closed for use as it was considered unsafe and any replacement would need to meet the very high standards of any bridge crossing a mainline railway. As costs would be prohibitive it is difficult to see how this can be achieved without substantial funding.

*AEv mentioned that he had been in discussions recently in relation to the bridge and people are walking this dangerous section of road and having to travel even further along to the outskirts of the village.*

PR offered to write to GC again to express the concerns of the LAF. It was possible for someone may want to make a claim for the route as a PRoW based on the twenty year rule.

*JP commented that possibly this was a WG assembly issue. He recommended exploring the option additional grants that may be available to do this.*

PR stated that he would mention this aspect in the letter to Highways.

ML asked which section it was.

PR explained that this was a short section alongside the road to the old bridge and a short distance from the AB centre.

*HR asked who would be responsible if any accidents occurred.*

PR stated that that would be a difficult question to answer given that it does now have a speed limit of 40mph. Nevertheless it was still a dangerous section of road without a pavement from the Outdoor Centre to Bryn Llestair with 9000 students a year.

He added that he would also speak with Barry Davies – Gwynedd's Maritime Officer to ascertain what the latest was if he has any information.

*HP recommended that we include the local MP into this correspondence.*

*Agreed that PR would write to GC Highways.*

**ii) Micro lights – very low flying**

PR confirmed to AEv that micro lights are subject to the same rules as aircraft with a minimum height of five hundred feet and one thousand feet over congested or built up areas unless where normal landing or taking off rules apply. It was difficult to ascertain where they had come from as there were three candidates – any visiting LLanbedr, Caernarfon (Dinas Dinlle and a private club) or Mona. They would monitor this issue.

**iii) Monitoring figures – SNPA website under `press releases`.**

A members had asked where these NP figures were on the SNP website. He acknowledged that these were not easy to find as they were under `press releases` so they intended to move them to make them easier to locate. *Currently they can be found on the following link<sup>1</sup>.*

The report did cover a wider range of paths apart from Snowdon and Ogwen. They also included other paths in the south of the NP such as Cadair Idris, Dol Idris (Minffordd) Precipice walk and the Mawddach trail.

**iv) Ysgwrn – Plas Capten – route**

The Plas Capten PRoW had been looked at by the Wardens following a request by GR. They had found that mostly this was passable by the public but one stile required some work and they would repair this as soon as they could fit it into their work plans. *This would then be called the GR stile.*

*GR made the general point that the NRW's forestry operation still left brash and trees across Public Rights of Way. Ffridd Llwyd near Traws was the latest area which was obstructed.*

*HP asked GR to send the grid references to PR.*

PR acknowledged that this was a perennial problem which they had raised with NRW many times at local and at national levels. He would forward this or any other similar issues of this type to the relevant officer within the NRW particularly if brash or fallen trees were involved.

**v) Other National Parks rolling CRoW access restrictions**

PR mentioned that one member had asked if any other NP's in the UK had permanent `access restrictions` on land similar to the one on the old Traws Ranges area (354Ha). Two other NP's parks had responded to this - the South Downs with two and the Peak District with one - all of which are a classed as being a danger to the public (Sect 25 CRoW Act) and none are for unexploded ordinance. The SNP have had three in the past – munitions and contaminated land.

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<sup>1</sup> Link to the NP Annual Monitoring Figures Report  
<https://www.snowdonia.gov.wales/authority/news-and-media/latest-news/2019-press-releases/2019-news-items/visitor-monitoring-report-2018-take-a-look-at-what-we-do>

The contaminated land example (in the Capel Curig area) was removed from the map under the last Countryside & Rights of Way Act (CRoW) map review.

*HR mentioned that he had come past this area this evening and that he had seen camper vans parked nearby this site.*

*HP asked if the WG had responded to our letter concerning this subject.*

PR stated that there was no direct response other than the WG saying that they may look at this in any future legislative review of CRoW. But as it currently stood the CRoW legislation has no flexibility when clearly those issues that present a danger to the public under Section 25 needed long term solutions.

## **5. Correspondence**

i) Welsh Government Consultation paper on 'Sustainable Farming and our Land' – see item 8.

## **6. Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan Gwynedd Council update**

**No update available from GC.**

PR stated that he apologies on behalf of WW as he had been unwell of late and had sent apologies. In mitigation he was short staffed and there was no additional funding for this exercise.

*DC commented that he wished to correct the figure for staffing mentioned in the previous meeting. When the original Rights Of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) was written the Rights of Way department within GC had fifteen staff and additional funding was made available from the WG to carry out this work. He emphasised that that department is now down to seven staff for the whole of Gwynedd with no additional monies made available by the WG.*

*HP thanked DC for this information.*

PR added that the strength of the whole ROWIP process was that this set a benchmark and consistency across Wales and that all local authorities were duty bound for the first time to evaluate their respective networks and have plans for the future. Later small grants – as recommended by the LAF's, were made available to all local authorities (via NRW) to enable local improvements to the network however, that funding had now come to an end. This grant had achieved great things for comparatively small monies and which had been fairly simple to administer. The LAF had written to the Minister since to recommend that these be reinstated as they had proved to be very good value for money.

*Addenda: This point was recently reiterated at the LAF conference directly to the Minister by a number LAF Chairs and Officers.*

## 7. Update by SNPA

### i) Cynllun Eryri update – Angela Jones – Partnership Manager SNP

AJ thanked the members for the invitation to update them on the Eryri Plan which lays out the future direction of the NP. This process is governed by legislation which places a duty on the NP to prepare a Plan. The NP has taken a partnership approach to this and to involve and work with all our stakeholders to conclude this process.

She informed the members that there was a public consultation between July and September of last year to enable stakeholders to input into this process. This generated an unprecedented six hundred and forty four responses. A significantly higher number than any previous consultation undertaken by the NP and the entire process to date has been led by that process and a major part of her role was ease out these ideas and data to form the outline of the plan.

The plan must revolve around our two statutory purposes as defined in the Environment Act 1995 which are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.

The Act goes on to say that in pursuing these purposes we (the Authority) shall seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Park.

AJ added that the role of the Local Access Forums touched on all three NP's purposes in various ways.

The plan will lay out the objectives, policies and actions across all work of the NP. This will include having a Recreation Strategy to deal with issues that may be pertinent and outline our role in formulating strategies typically for long distance routes, off roading, community links and loops, events, improving our provision for all ability access wherever possible and to increase access opportunities for socially excluded groups. So much of this is directly relatable to the role of the LAF's.

*What's next?* AJ explained that the next stage was that the action plan was going to our Partnership Working Group soon and thereafter to the NP Authority and following this in January until March of next year, open for public consultation. If members felt that they wished to contribute to this process then this was the time to make their views known and they are welcome to pass on their observations or ideas to her directly or through PR.

Members requested that the draft Plan be made available to them in the next LAF meeting set for December 2019 to review and comment.

*EJW asked if there was a link to this paper and could we see the slides she has given this evening so we could begin to form our respective opinions.*

AJ stated that this was still a draft currently but it would be made available before the next LAF meeting in March.

*JP commented that there was little mention in what he had seen regarding the economy. He also made the point that there was not an imbalance between certain stakeholders and others particularly as the LAF was equally to them as a statutory body.*

*GR noted that surely there are statutory consultees for this process and what language they consult with especially through the medium of Welsh.*

*AJ stated that there was no list of statutory consultees just a list of stakeholders that regularly engage with the NP through the course of its normal business. She added that many that the NP had received many comments and observations in the first consultations in the Welsh language and that this was completely normal for the NP.*

*GR asked how much work on the initial consultation had been done through social media which is so popular with young people.*

*AJ stated that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to use social media during the first phase of consultations with 132,000 responses and Twitter was at 45,000. There was also a specific YouTube video.*

*GR added that in his experience without a car then he thought that many of these meetings should be held during the day or even over weekends so members of the public could get to contribute to local issues such as this consultation.*

*HJ also recommended that they consult with Young Farmers groups more directly as a part of this process as they were the future for our countryside.*

*AJ added that in terms of economy that JP had raised. One of the NP purposes places a duty to "foster the economic and social well being of local communities within the National Park" and the NP plan would include other policies that cover this aspect of its duties.*

*DE mentioned that both the disabilities access groups had been a part of this process from the onset.*

*EJW commented that there was a surfeit of consultations currently particularly those emanating from the WG and it was difficult to get to all of them. The local public were very interested in what the NP was doing and he recommended that the NP place any consultations firmly on their website to make them easy to find.*

*AJ stated that the initial consultation had been on their website and had been successful and next phase would also be done in a similar fashion. Certainly the feeling was that this had been as convenient and simple for people to follow as was possible – especially via the website information.*

*HP thanked AJ for her time this evening to update us on the NP plan.*

## **ii) Warden Section**

*AD stated that he had hoped to present the new structure of the Warden Service this evening but that this is unfortunately still being assessed by the Management Team. He*

hoped to have a favourable response by next week. Once agreed it would then be circulated as a draft which would come to the LAF for their views in time for their next meeting. It would also be part of the NP's community road show in October. This will be an ideal opportunity to get some feedback from the communities and the public.

*HR mentioned that he felt that a major concern that should be within the remit of the Warden Service in the area was litter and the issue of an adequate amount of bins provided by the NP. This was the type of issue where the messages needed to go out via the Wardens to educate people how to behave in the countryside.*

AD commented that littering was a problem in many other areas of the NP particularly Snowdon and that they actively targeted this problem on Snowdon via the Snowdon Partnership and where they work together with the Communication team to get those messages out and also with NGO's such as Cymdeithas Eryri – Snowdonia Society to arrange clear ups in the various hot spots. This year in Llyn Tegid (Bala) a simple trial was conducted recently by the placing of a simple 'A' (information) board on site which asked the public to help us keep the area clean and also to take the opportunity to spend five minutes clearing litter – *bags provided*. Some people had seriously taken this on board and were keen to help. However, over a Bank Holiday weekend the littering on that site is at a serious level and where staff find it difficult to keep it under control. This was a serious issue for the NP staff and to dispose of all this waste which is costly and labour intensive.

They are also talking to other organisations such as the National Trust and Keep Wales Tidy to try to have a more consistent approach to this. The NT's example had been to place a message alongside bins which listed how much it was costing to that particular bin empty each year asked people to consider not using bins at all which had made a difference.

They were also looking at using voluntary Wardens to also assist with this over weekends.  
But every site was different.

*EJW commented that this had been a long standing problem in Meirionnydd. It was decided by the Community Councils in some areas to remove the bins completely with signs asking people to 'take it home' and this had worked well. He questioned why the authorities had asked people to use plastic bags for dog mess when they should really be using biodegradable bags for this. Placing it in non-bio degradable plastic bag is surely the worse thing to do. Especially when people throw them into trees or leave them behind.*

*HP commented that it should be removed from any site by the dog owner.*

*GR added that there are now no bins for dog waste in Traws.*

*JP replied that dog waste could now be deposited into any litter bin*

PR commented that in defence that the NP is very proactive in terms of issues related to dogs and there has been a lot of effort in terms of public information that has been produced. But it was a constant battle to educate people. What really would make a

difference would be prosecutions `on the ground` - both for dog mess and for littering. This would certainly make the news and get a stronger message out but the Wardens and other field staff have an unenviable job as it stands.

Added to the general litter issue we also have a problem with organic waste – banana skins, orange peel and apple cores, teabags etc. When you consider that over 550,000 people walk up Snowdon each year and 55,000 on Cadair Idris and almost everyone generates some form of organic waste then this is also a serious problem. It takes two years to break down an orange peel in that type of environment.

Unfortunately the NP does not have any powers to carry this out fines for littering.

*EJW asked how the NP staff would feel if enforcement powers were given to them.*

*JP commented that generally litter generated more litter but when people found an area clean and tidy then it was usually left in the same condition. He appreciated that much work is being done in terms of providing the right information to the public. He added that much of this could be attributed to overnight parking by camper vans. That may be an issue that the NP may need to address.*

PR commented that this issue was not directly related to camper vans use of car parks overnight – there was a large element of anti social behaviour and lack of understanding across the social spectrum of the effects of littering and in his experience it was also not limited to car parks and/or visitors or age groups.

This was fundamentally a societal issue which needed to go back to educational and to move away from the generation of litterers in the first place.

**Agreed** that PR write to Minister to ask how they intended to tackle this issue for the future and what can be done.

## **8. Sustainable Farming and our Land consultation**

PR stated that this was a large document which concerns itself with the future of farming post Brexit. However, in terms of the LAF response their only terms of reference was aimed only at the access provisions within it. *\* Members can make their own representations independently as members of the public if they felt they wanted to for any other part of the document.*

He informed the members that the Chairs had agreed a joint LAF response to this consultation. However, the way the consultation was assembled it was difficult to answer questions directly related to access *per se*. Therefore it was decided to respond using bullet points generally highlighting the LAF's concerns in relation to access. *It was concerning that there was no mention of CRoW access land and only scant reference to PRow generally spread across various sections of the document.*

General points of concern were:

Lack of clarity in terms of PRow management and is mixed with other topics

No mention of CRoW access land (over 60% of the NP is CRoW access land)  
References to cross compliance in terms of PRow are vague  
Lack of clarity in terms of PRow legislation – realignments need to follow due legal process and changes must be mutually beneficial.  
No mention of potential access to water  
Mentions multi use – this is not favoured by the NP and LAF's.

He asked members for their opinion on the pages that he had previously circulated.

He added that there had been a discussion between RoW Officers in Wales and they had indicated that the issue of pre compliance in terms of RoW would be advantageous rather than post entry. This would certainly focus the minds of landowners and RoW Officers and he thought that many problems could be resolved in a very short space of time. The second option was to make sure that schemes included a time frame for their PRow to be fully open – for example the first twelve months of entry.

*HP commented that under the present schemes landowners are supposed to keep their respective RoW open. Typically Glastir or the previous Tir Gofal.*

PR continued and informed the members there was no mention of CRoW access land within the document which seemed perverse – when sixty six percent of the NP was CRoW access land and served a large range of recreational activities.

*HP mentioned that there was an interesting comment in one section where it mentions the possibility of landowners working with their respective LAF's*

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*" This may involve the re-alignment of existing Public Rights of Way, which can also benefit the Farmers themselves, avoiding problems with routes that currently pass through inappropriate areas of the farm. In realignment, the farmer could work in partnership and in liaison with Local Access Forum and Local Authority to establish value networks that draw on local heritage".*

*GR questioned what the meaning was of "inappropriate areas of the farm". This was not a good definition. It should have read `unsuitable` (in the English). This may cause some consternation in some quarters such as the Rambler Cymru.*

PR commented that the phrase `benefit farmers themselves` is in itself problematic. Any changes considered to existing routes/Row must always be assessed according to them being `mutually beneficial` to users and landowners. There would also be statutory requirements to implement such changes.

*GR asked what was an `inappropriate area of a farm`.*

*HP replied that any farmyard is these days inappropriate given that they are largely full of what are industrial machinery and is a factory floor.*

*GR recommended that the PRow legislative system needed to change in tandem with these proposals.*

PR reminded the members he had written a paper in 2013 recommending easier changes to enable this. He would attach a copy for this in the next minutes.

*JP added that certainly the Health & safety issue should be paramount here.*

*HP commented that changes to lines should be easier and cheaper to achieve if all parties are supportive for any given route.*

*HP added that the current process of PRow legislation made changes very expensive and subject to sometimes spurious objection.*

PR added that ideally any new mechanisms should enable us to move a route deemed inappropriate but that they should be agreed by all. Certainly there is room to utilise the LAF's for this purpose. They had also recommended that orders are not subject to newspaper advertising as this is prohibitively expensive and arguably could be advertised on local authority websites.

**Agreed** that PR would bullet point the response to the paper in terms of access and refer them to the LAF Chairs for approval or changes.

PR mentioned that there may be an issue with cattle being pushed further up the mountain through agri environmental schemes which may be on PRow or CRow access land and where people do not expect to see them. People will need to be aware of this including scheme Officers.

## **9. Tywyn – Bryncrug – Flood bank access improvements**

PR mentioned that in conjunction with GC they had done some work on two bridleways known as the Nantlle – Fron link (he showed some slides). Originally this was part of an unsuccessful grant bid but as it had so much merit for low comparatively low cost they had persevered without the project.

Also included in the original grant bid was one route in Meirionnydd which was to improve the link along the embankment between Tywyn and Bryncrug. This link is currently a flat section of the All Wales Coastal Path but with some minor changes by widening gate widths and road entry points then it could be made to accommodate `Tramper` type off road disabled vehicles. This could become an impressive `Tramper trail`. There is also the potential for an accessible bird hide nearer Tywyn.

He ask the LAF members if they would support this small scheme to enable PR to take this to the next level and also to discuss this with the Tywyn Town Council before Christmas. They would then sit down and discuss this with GC's Coastal Officer.

*JP asked if the Tramper could use this bridleway as it was.*

PR stated that users could manage this route but the gating was not so easy to negotiate and the road entrance in Bryncrug needed to be changed. Tramper users are generally accompanied but currently access on this route was not easy. The widening of the gates would make a big difference.

*HP asked members for their views on this.*

*AEv commented that there was a plan to have some community routes and the flood embankment was one of these. He was sure the Council would be willing to hear PR's ideas for this. It would also be useful to have a cut off point half way along to enable people to get back sooner if they wished.*

PR offered to attend a meeting in the coming months to explain this.

*HR commented that providing resources such as this by simple changes were really important recreational assets in the countryside to those who were disabled or less abled as well as abled bodied persons and is directly related to the health agenda.*

*HP asked members if they would support this work.*

**Agreed**

## **10. Bala Lake Railway Update**

PR informed the members that Julian Brierly had sent an update for the Bala Railway development. Unfortunately he may only be able to attend the LAF in March for an update. He had stated to PR that they are fundraising for £300k to extend the route into the town and they had already received some funding to purchase the building and parking required.

ML asked if there was a PRoW along side this.

*GR stated that there was a short section of footpath in part nearer the town. He added that in the 1980's this potential development was included in the Local Development Plan. He asked what the position was regarding the old line to Llangollen as this had recently been extended to Corwen.*

PR suggested that they leave any questions to JB when he attended in March.

*EJW thought that if the main line heritage railway to the town from Corwen was ever developed at some time in the future then this would prove to be an unprecedented boost to the local economy.*

## **11. Recommended agenda items for next meeting**

- a) Coastal Path NRW business toolkit
- b) SNPA Recreation Strategy draft either Dec or March
- c) Draft Warden Service Strategy
- d) Dates for next year's meetings – 2020
- e) Election of new members in 2020
- f) Dark Skies Project

## **12. Any Other Business**

- a)** *LA asked PR who was now responsible for the signage on Taith Ardudwy (TA) as some were in need of replacement as there are many missing signs particularly in the middle section.*

PR commented that it was largely the NP who had erected many of the signs in conjunction with the Community Councils and the TA group's members at that time. He appreciated that some may have come to the end of their lifespan. He confirmed that some work had been done recently by local Wardens but he would inquire how far that work had gone and what was outstanding. He thought that some signage was still in our possession. He would check this.

*AN added that it was possible that the local Meirionnydd Ramblers could offer to assist with this if required.*

PR stated that this was useful to know and may take them up on this offer and pass that offer onto the Wardens.

- b)** *LA mentioned that things were progressing well with this years Barmouth Walking Festival with over 415 walks booked over the ten days. One of the walks was on Taith Ardudwy which was on one day walk! 6am start. Possibly they could indicate where there are missing signs.*

*HJ asked if they had any PR from the national press or TV over this as it was so successful.*

*LA stated that to date they had not but it was worth pursuing some positive PR.*

- c)** *LG asked if there was any update on the equine access for the Mawddach Trail.*

PR informed the members that he had recently written a brief and commissioned an external consultant to look at this in some detail to advise the authority on the best way forward. He hoped to meet with him in at the end of October. One other landowner has also been visited but he didn't see any issues with them. He would advise members how this had gone hopefully at the next meeting.

- d)** *GR asked if it was possible to have someone responsible for transportation plans in GC to give us a better understanding of how their plans are formulated. In his opinion there seemed to be a disjoin in the thinking over public transport in the area.*

ML asked if any members had attended any Public Service Board meetings where these issues could be aired. They did discuss rural isolation and health and wellbeing. Possibly this was a vector to get those messages across. She tasked if the LAF's had a representative on them.

PR confirmed that our CEO was a member of that group but he little information on their deliberations. In terms of the transport planning he would inquire if anyone could come from GC to give the LAF an insight into their strategy.

*e) AN asked if the LAF had responded to the WG consultation (white) paper had been responded to.*

PR stated that this had been responded to but would send a copy to AN for his information along with a number of others for his information. Currently the WG were appointing technical groups to discuss the changes that were required in relation to the processes and legislation for PRoW. This also included a technical group that was focused on access to water as the next stage of the consultation process.

*GR felt that in terms of the LAF then possibly some members may benefit from additional training in these subjects.*

PR stated that he would give this some thought.

*f) DE reported that the Mawddach Trail sign near the Marian car park was broken.*

PR would look into this and mention it to SR.

*g) HR asked if there had been any form of post mortem following the Bala Triathlon*

PR stated that there had been some discussions and that next year they were going back to the September rather than peak season which was less stressful to manage at the lakeside for staff. However, it did go well and the road closures were shorter which seemed easier all round with local access allowed.

*h) AEv mentioned the signage and spray painting that had gone out to Race the Train event organisers.*

PR would consult with the organisers as the NP actively discourages spray marking and tape for any event in the NP.

**13. Date of Next Meeting – 3rd December 2019 – Venue to be confirmed**

