

**Minutes of the Northern Snowdonia Local Access Forum Meeting
held on Monday 6th March 2023 at 5.45p.m
at Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog**

Present - Members:

Mr Edwin Noble (Chair)	Mr Arthur Davies
Mr John Gladston	Mr Richard Williams
Mrs Hillary Davies	Mr David Firth
Mr Robin Parry	Mr Tim Jones
Mr Mark Jones	Mr Dafydd Gwyndaf
Mr John Hardy	

Speakers and Officers

Peter Rutherford (SNPA)	Rhian Williams (SNPA).
Adam Daniel (SNPA).	

EB (Chair) welcomed all to this evening's proceedings.

1. **Apologies -** Molly Lovatt (NRW), Fiona Davies
Kate Worthington

2. **Previous minutes**

Approved

3. **Matters arising**

i) **Fishermans Dolwyddelan update**

PR reported that following an inquiry from a member concerning the ladders and ropes on the Fisherman's path on the Afon Lledr (Dolwyddelan) he had discussed this with the National Trust, as this was their property, They had advised that once they had received consent (from the NRW) and appointed a contractor they were shortly to remove the ladders and ropes given their poor condition and the risks they posed. There were no plans to replace these.

Given their history and the fact that many outdoor centres had used the site for many years this was unfortunate, but they were unsafe and in poor condition and were becoming a liability and removing them was understandable.

EN added that there was also a parking issue associated with this site as minibuses and cars frequently parked in inappropriate places on what is a dangerous trunk road.

MJ commented that it may be appropriate for the NT to erect some site signage to indicate that this route was no longer available.

DG added that it was likely that this would only be announced once they had actually completed the work.

PR commented that following this discussion he would mention this to the NT and would ask how they intended to inform the public.

ii) Memorial Plaques – Penmaenmawr

PR had received a response from Penmaenmawr community council on this topic and they had agreed to carry a link on their website to the NP website advice note relating to `memorials and plaques`¹. This would be useful so any inquires would be more easily dealt with. He showed some slides of the current situation in Foel Lus.

This continued to happen in other places across the NP and was a common on Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon but that these were removed.

PR received regular requests, but it was always preferable that people considered something else such as tree planting or making a donation to bodies such as the Mountain Rescue Teams, National Trust, Woodland Trust, North Wales Wildlife Trust and others in the area or the National Park directly where monies would be spent on path works or for the purchase and maintenance of disabilities vehicles. There were many options rather than simply erecting a plaque or memorial.

Ashes were also a problem on Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon in particular and occurred regularly but was difficult to control.

HD commented that she knew of some that had been removed in Penmaenmawr

iii) P5 – Pen Y Pass Cromlech path

EN asked if PR could clarify if he meant that people would be encouraged to use the route as this was within CRoW access land and they could go anywhere within it.

PR replied that EN had made an interesting point and was entirely correct in that it was all CRoW access land between the two points. However, it was always preferable to users to be able to get from A – B - C using linear connections even on CRoW access land and using a linear route was also a safer option and did not burden the NP with the requirement for more unnecessary infrastructure.

There were a number of the `CRoW access routes` they had improved following the inception of CRoW such as the Tarren (Pant Perthog – Aberdyfi) and Maes Glasau - Waun Oer (Dinas Mawddwy – Tal Y Llyn and part of the Cambrian Way) were in fact linear routes albeit they were in isolated places. They were also easier to manage and maintain rather than having furniture

¹

<https://authority.snowdonia.gov.wales/information/memorials-and-scattering-ashes/>

spread about and was certainly easier for landowners. The NP is responsible for that furniture.

If there were new routes identified as other potential CRow access routes then they would be looked at to assess their merits.

iv) p6 Gwynedd ROWIP

PR mentioned that the review had now been concluded and thought it was likely that GC would review their path categorisations – especially given the changes in patterns of use on some PRow during and following Covid. This may be up to the Local Communities to decide and make recommendations.

v) p7 Recreation Strategy update

PR informed the members that the final draft had been to management Team and was now ready to go to Performance and Resources Committee – however this was in July but that this gave them time to get it translated before consultation. Following this it would go to other stakeholders and LAF members for their views. He was not expecting major changes but thought as it stood was a frank and fair document and was a vast improvement on the previous one.

vi) Events communication

EN mentioned that he was aware that some landowners had not been informed by events organisers that they would be passing through their land last year. Was it possible for the NP to make available a list of landowners of some description that can be passed on.

PR was aware of some issues last season but thankfully these were few. He expected all organisers to `do their homework` and inform landowners along their routing especially if they occur away from Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon.

He was aware that sometimes it was difficult to get landowner information and the NP was not allowed to pass on landowner's details to third parties due to GDPR² legislation (and also that contra to popular belief the NP does not hold an exhaustive list of landownerships).

AD added that to try to overcome this problem the NP was asking landowners for permission, by way of a generic letter, to pass on their details when required. This would help organisers where there was gaps in their knowledge, but this can only be done with landowners' permission and only for these purposes – this would include activities such as events or filming.

EN asked what would happen if one landowner didn't sign up.

² GDPR - The General Data Protection Regulation to protect personal data. This is EU legislation but will be adopted in some form by UK or national Governments.

AD stated that it would then be up to the parties concerned to find the landowners and approach them directly in some way but that it could not be done by the NP given the legislation.

vii) Capel Curig – Crafnant path

PR confirmed that he was now getting very positive comments about the upgrading works that were undertaken on the bridleway between Nant Y Geuallt and Clogwen Mawr. Interestingly one person in particular who had vehemently opposed the work in the beginning had conceded that this was a much-improved situation.

4. Correspondence

None

5. LAF Membership re-election

PR informed the members that they were now (surprisingly) coming to the end of their LAF membership period of tenure - this was a three-year cycle as required by the CRoW Act which includes Local Access Forums³.

Therefore this March meeting will be their last for this period. He appreciated people's commitment and that it had been difficult to maintain momentum during Covid but added that he would encourage all members to re-apply. The knowledge and experience around the table was important to the NP and the LAF's deliberations.

He stressed that the application forms would be submitted to a subgroup of 4 members from the Authority for approval. It was important that membership needed to be balanced between the landowner and user interests with a member also representing the disabled sector. There was a time limit for this, and he asked that if members wanted to re-apply then to please get their applications in as soon as possible – by the 3rd of April.

He thanked all members for their varied contributions and assistance over this period and EN for his support and Chairmanship.

HD asked if the NP could attempt to recruit younger members.

PR replied that he fully appreciated this comment and that over the years they had tried very hard to be more inclusive but that this had been difficult to

³ The Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001
The Local Access Forums and how they are run and administered are dictated by Statutory Instrument.

achieve. They had approached various organisations including Young Farmers groups to enable this, but responses were few and slow.

The gender issues also remained, and it would be preferable to have more women as members but that was improving. They would also continue to get those messages out via their social media pages whilst recruiting for new members.

MJ commented that the Outdoor Partnership could assist and get those messages out to some of their members who would be interested in joining. They would be more than willing to circulate any of this membership information.

He mentioned if there was any value in having some form of public information about the LAF members.

TJ mentioned that in his experience that the LAF's were not unique in having this issue and other groups and committees were facing similar problems in terms of creating interest from younger generations and addressing the gender gap.

He did note that it was the same form that was required by existing members and asked if current members needed to fill another simpler version.

PR stated that filling out the same form ensured consistency of approach and a generic form allowed the Authority panel to judge all on the same basis. However, it may be worthy of discussion, and he would think on this aspect.

EN asked if the application form was available online via the NP's website.

RPW stated that it was available online.

TJ asked if specific groups such as the BMC, Ramblers or BHS and others were actively targeted. This was also a good opportunity for young people to gain experience in the sector.

RPW replied that there was a generic list of organisations that were sent applications forms and they were encouraged to get interested members to apply.

RP mentioned that there was no presence from Gwynedd Council and asked why this was the case. There was a candidate in Llanberis who would be a useful member.

PR stated that their membership was only 1 person from GC, but the choice of nominee would have to be for GC to decide. The current incumbent had not attended and that a member would again be required for the new tenure. They would write to ask for an update and who their representative would be. RP's suggestion was a sensible solution to this.

He further explained that there was usually one Councillor from GC, one from Conwy and one from the Authority (TJ).

PR stated that he would inquire about what could be done around RP`s suggestion.

MJ asked how many members the LAF has.

PR stated that this was 18 per LAF – with the same number in the south and new membership applications were always a little oversubscribed but not by much.

AD mentioned that there was a Youth Engagement officer that may be able to assist in the future with getting these messages out to younger generations and groups.

6. Mountain biking downhill courses set up in Sychnant area.

PR explained that a problem had developed in the Sychnant area where a downhill mountain bike course had been built illegally during the Covid lockdowns on someone`s land without consent (or planning).

He had advised the landowner that this was not just a matter of trespass, but criminal damage and that a formal complaint should be made to the North Wales Police (NWP). They NWP were aware of this issue and had made inquiries, but it was possible for some to face prosecution if they persisted. Some tracks may also be within SSSI and that would require an investigation by the NRW if damage had occurred to any of the features cited⁴.

When more was known he would update the members on this problem.

HD commented that surely it may be a good thing to encourage mountain cyclists to do this in a controlled manner rather than move them on elsewhere.

PR stated whilst he appreciated the lack of provision in the area for this activity this course had been set up on what was private land without permission and may be damaging to the site. A new venture like this would require landowner and various other consents including Planning so was fraught with difficulties so currently it was an illegal activity.

TJ mentioned that this was a regular problem with the NRW in some places. He appreciated that on private land this was more problematic.

JG asked how this a criminal act.

⁴ Sites of Special Specific Interest (SSSI) were denoted under the Countryside Act (1981) and subsequent amendments since. Sites can be denoted for their biological and/or their geological importance.

PR stated that if the land was damaged then this was criminal damage to a private land, *and all built surreptitiously within Covid lockdown period*. In this instance it was a private matter unless any SSSI features have been compromised – then this was another criminal matter for the NRW to deal with.

HD asked if this was a similar problem to the off roading motorcyclists. We may not be open or accessible for new initiatives where there may be potential in some areas to enable these activities.

DG mentioned that the off roading motor cyclists are problematic in his area and are venturing farther and farther and was problematic.

RP reminded the members that the LAF had discussed this in some depth previously and had written to the Minister about this specific issue to ask what the potential was for the provision of new sites within NRW forestry areas (as a state-owned asset) as alternatives for riders attempting to ride `off piste` and causing difficulties.

EN stated that the response to the letter had been disappointing when clearly this was an increasing problem across the area and needed to be addressed in some way.

MJ mentioned that it was tempting to move people on, but it did not solve the problem in the longer term and alternative provisions would be useful.

DG added that much of this was not local riders – although there were some, but organised riders from outside the area who went wherever they wanted then disappeared until the next time.

PR concurred that this was an issue across the NP and difficult to monitor and control. The NRW had had some success working with the Police but often this was not a priority for them. He would find the letter of response to this for the benefit of the new members for the next meeting.

TJ commented that there was an acknowledgement within the NRW that the off roading was a frequent occurrence across Wales. These bikes were often not roadworthy, and a great deal of time and effort was expended by the Police and the NRW in dealing with this issue. They were also a risk to other users within the forest tracks such as horse riders and walkers accessing the forest legally. Attempts have been made on private land in northeast Wales but was found to be difficult to manage and damaging.

He added that in clear felled areas the land is supposed to be reinstated as it was previously.

EN commented that the original conversation was regarding mountain cycles and noted that not everyone agreed how this issue should be resolved given the interesting point made by HD in relation to provision.

DG added that if this was private land and/or within a SSSI then that would be an illegal act.

PR mentioned that if any damaged land was within a SSSI then it was potentially the landowner who could be prosecuted through no fault of their own.

TJ mentioned that it was possible to prosecute third parties if it could be proved that it was they who knowingly caused deliberate damage to a SSSI. Therefore signage was important.

PR would monitor this and report back.

7. Update on Warden Section works programme for 2023

AD reported that the Wardening Service including the Project Officer had undertaken a wide scope of works over the past year.

- The Project Officer (Hywel Jones) was currently scoping work on the Miners track following a significant landslip. This will present significant logistical challenges.
- Alun Jones (Warden Yr Wyddfa) is undertaking some replacement of stiles in the Cnicht and Croeso area.
- Nant Gwynant continues to be a hot spot and the NT are in the process of engaging an additional Warden for the area to assist with the management of the area.
- Ffion Warner (Assistant Warden – Yr Wyddfa). Overseeing contact for re fencing the Rhyd Ddu Zig Zags.
- Waymarking almost complete for Pont Cromlech – Pen Y Pass
- New wall and seat at Llanberis gate complete to tidy up this area.
- Ioan Davies (Warden in the Betws Y Coed area) – undertaking footpath infrastructure work in the Bro Garmon and other areas including Dolwyddelan, Penmachno and Clwt Y Bugail and some new boardwalk furniture on the upper Conwy River canoe egress point.
- Alan Prichard (Warden) undertaking various maintenance work in the lower Conwy Valley and Carneddau including work on Rights of Way under the Conwy Service Level Agreement (SLA).
- Various small projects planned to use the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places Access Fund (SLSPF). Some will come from the Sustainable Tourism element. Some monies will also go to the next section of Cylchdaith Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon Circular) Cwm Dyli and potentially a feasibility for the link in Nant Peris.

PR added that it was his understanding that the extension to the wall in Bwlch Y Moch was also on the list.

AD stated that the Project Officer was looking at this. There was delays due a considerable backlog of heli lifts to be completed.

EN mentioned that he had recently heard a presentation on how Welsh Government may want to encourage mountain burning to stop so many and uncontrolled wildfires.

TJ mentioned that this would have to be done at appropriate times of the year.

JG asked what was happening with the Miners track.

AD stated that there was a section that required work given the ground movement that had occurred. They were considering the options at the moment and would then seek the various consents given that it was within the Natural Nature Reserve (NNR) /Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC), but it was a difficult place to access and undertake any works.

EN asked AD how many Wardens there were.

AD stated that there was one Senior Warden in the north, with the Warden for Yr Wyddfa and an Assistant Warden for Yr Wyddfa, and two Wardens based in Betws Y Coed for the Carneddau and the Conwy Valley. In the south we have one senior Warden with three Wardens and a Warden and assistant Warden (Bala) and two in Dolgellau (one post currently vacant). The lack of staff is problematic but was only what was possible due to the National Parks baseline budget. This was perverse given the proven increase in visitor numbers in recent years and the challenges they presented including post Covid issues.

TJ commented that NP's baseline budget was now in line with the 2010 budget which was well below what was required. Authority members were working hard to rectify this in their discussions with Welsh Government.

DF commented that there were early indications that Nant Gwynant was already experiencing high numbers so early in the year.

EN thanked AD for his update.

8. Proposed Animal Welfare Act - Update

PR updated the members of the progress of this bill. It was currently on its third reading. It was interesting that the NRW had been running some workshops recently (of which he was a participant) regarding the control of dogs and he wondered why these were not postponed until after this Bill was enacted and once any further legal requirements were known.

It was interesting to note that Rob Taylor (RT) – one of the originators of the Rural Crimes Teams for North Wales was also an advisor to the Police Service on dogs in the countryside and had given evidence at the committee stages of this proposed bill. He had informed the NRW group that, based on significant historical records, that 80% of dog attacks on livestock were the result of dogs which had escaped from home with only 20% resulting from

dog walkers *per se*. He had also stated that over 70% of these involved huskie breeds.

PR mentioned that RT had addressed both the National Parks' LAF's on Rural Crimes and the off roading issue in the past and it may be useful if he could update the LAF's once again if available. Either next meetings in June or September. He asked if members had any thoughts on this.

It was important to note that these statistics were based on evidence from over 800 cases RT had dealt with over many years. This was a surprising result. Hopefully, any new legislation would be stronger in terms of enforcement.

RW mentioned that it was always difficult to pursue such individuals with dogs harassing stock but that it was important to report such incidents to the Police.

ADav commented that the figures may be swayed somewhat due to the fact that not all incidents were reported when they should be, and this would enable Police to react accordingly if incident numbers were increasing in some locations.

EN asked if PR could ask him to attend.

PR would inquire.

JG asked if the NP and the Warden Service could issue fines.

AD stated that they were not empowered to do this and personally he would not be in favour of possessing these powers. The Wardens role was to work with landowners and other agencies to address these issues.

DH added that he had experienced this many times on his land but had not reported anyone as by the time it was reported the culprits had departed the scene.

AD mentioned that it was still important that reports were made and to target problem areas – in conjunction with other agencies if required.

ADav. added that he had experience of this issue, but he was told by the Police that it was for him to pursue.

TJ added that the Welsh Government was driven by statistics and anything that was reported would be useful to the Police.

9. Snowdon Pillars – Update & Pont Glochig - Beddgelert.

Pillars

PR mentioned that the font on most of the summit stone pillars were now weather worn and would need to be repainted in situ. This was due to be done

in the October prior to Covid but the weather had changed badly at the time, so this was left. They would try to get this done early in the season if trains were running.

There was still a question over the colour – currently these were black and wondered if members had any views on this. White had been discussed in the past but this would be difficult to see in poor visibility or in winter conditions.

EN asked what the issue was with using black lettering.

PR stated that this was more difficult to discern in poor weather as well, but it was the best option so far.

MJ commented that it did look sometimes as if there was a large black patch on the pillars.

PR explained that the lettering sat within a sand blasted ground out section of the rock face to try to get the lettering to stand out and black colouring worked well in reasonable light. There was no *one way or another* regarding this and they thought best to stick with what they have.

JG asked if would have been possible to add a bearing and distance to some of the pillars.

PR commented that this may have limited use for most walkers, and they were anxious at the time not to clutter the wording and keep it as simple as possible. The only pillar denoting a distance was the summit (east) pillar indicating the location of the Watkin path at 200m below the summit and to discourage people from setting off down the east slope from the summit itself which was undesirable and could lead to difficulties.

However, this was an interesting notion that JG had made, and they may look at the website mapping information and if that required additional direction material such as compass bearings.

The routes for Snowdon Ranger and the Watkin path had been slightly amended on the Definitive and then the OS maps in recent years to avoid difficulties caused by people using GPS mapping which may have led them *off piste* and into difficult terrain.

Pont Glochig (Lon Gwyrfa)

PR explained that this bridge was on the boundary between Cwm Cloch farmland and the NRW Beddgelert forestry block along part of Lon Gwyrfa. One side was level with the adjacent land, but one half had a set of steps which were not accessible other than by on foot albeit there was a ford alongside

EN asked how much more of the track would then be available for disabilities type vehicles.

PR stated that it would not add anything to the length, but it would make it easier for people on the Trampler to cross the river rather than having to use the adjacent ford which was subject to flooding. *Although the Trampler type vehicles can cope with about 250mm of water it was not ideal when the river was frequently in spate throughout the year.* They were minded removing the steps and install a concrete ramp to enable this.

One of the NP Trampler vehicles was based in Beddgelert Forest at Bikes the Forest Holiday site which was adjacent to LG. He stressed that Lon Gwyrfaï was not designed as an all-ability trail but that it did lend itself as a multiuser trail and was suited for use by a Trampler type vehicle.

This would require planning consent and he had engaged Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy to scope out the work and design.

He would update the members once he was a little further into the process.

JG mentioned that it was disappointing and clearly a design oversight that this was not on the original bridge plan.

PR concurred but they would try to rectify this. Hopefully, he would also organise a site visit for the members once works were completed.

TJ asked if Forest Holidays would make a contribution towards this adaptation to the bridge.

MJ added that he thought they did have a local communities fund that donated monies to local causes.

PR stated that he had not asked but it may be worth inquiring about.

DF thought this a good idea as it was the one section of Lon Gwyrfaï that was difficult to negotiate with the Trampler vehicle and building a ramp this would be a very useful addition. He had seen for himself some users having difficulty crossing this point.

DF also mentioned that the other section from the lower station area path to beyond the underpass was also in poor condition and was difficult underfoot.

PR agreed that was aware that this was an issue, but they would look at this.

EN thanked PR for the updates

10. Recommended Agenda items for next meeting –

- i) Rob Taylor – update on Rural Crimes and Animal Welfare Act.

- ii) Update of Wardening activity from Ioan Davies and/or Rhys Weldon Roberts of the Ogwen Partnership.
- iii) SNP Transport Strategy – Angela Jones

11. Any Other business

- i) *JG asked generally if the NP had a budget for maintaining the Tramper vehicles.*

PR stated that they were in reasonable condition, and they did have a small budget for this, and they were serviced annually and were not prohibitively expensive to maintain. They had been advised that the first one they purchased now required new batteries. Although there are no charges applied for their use/hire people do make donations and those monies go towards covering these costs.

They had also recently acquired a new four-wheeler cycle type (Da Vinci) which was still under test – although it did not have as good battery capacity as the Tramper. This was more amenable for use by younger disabled persons.

JG stated that he had ridden this, and it could do wheelies!!

- ii) *DG mentioned that there had been many complaints regarding the illegal roadside parking in Ogwen and asked what was the latest on the issue as it did not seem to be a priority for Trunk Road.*

PR stated that he was aware that yellow lines were scheduled to be installed soon.

AD (through the Chair) added that this had been under discussion by a joint group – Trunk Road, Conwy, Gwynedd Highways, and the Ogwen Partnership. It was also his understanding that they will soon install double yellow lines where the inappropriate parking occurs. It is part of the wider transport strategy for the area. This transport strategy also included new public transport initiatives.

PR added that this had been frustrating, and the NP had been in dialogue with those agencies for the last 2 years to action the yellow lines.

There was a new bus service operating between Bangor and Corwen (T10) which had proved popular and that there was also now an electric minibus - Bws Ogwen run by Partneriaeth Ogwen.

DG added that it did not take long for this to happen before a major incident occurs in the area.

HD asked if it was possible to get an update on the Transport Strategy report from the NP.

PR stated that he would discuss this with Angela Jones at the NP to seek her view on this as an item.

EN thanked all for the contributions this evening and hoped to see them in June and asked that all perspective members return their applications to the NP.

12. Date of next meeting – 5th June 2023 5.45pm.