

**Minutes of the South Snowdonia Local Access Forum Meeting held
on Tuesday 25th June 2024 at 5.45 p.m
Gwesty Pengwern, Llan Ffestiniog**

Present – Members:

Mr Aled Thomas	Mr Alun Edwards
Mr Hedd Pugh	Mr Huw Roberts
Mrs Janette Holmes	Mr Tim Faire
Mr David Coleman	Mr Delwyn Evans
Mrs Gaynor Davies	

Officers / Observers:

Peter Rutherford (SNPA)	David P Jones (SNPA)
Rhian P Williams (SNPA)	Gwyn Evans (CG)

HP welcomed all to the meeting this evening.

1. Apologies

Mr Alun Evans	Mr Emlyn Roberts
Cllr Eryl Jones Williams	Mrs Lesley Amison
Mr J Pughe-Roberts	Mr Geraint Rowlands
Mr Rhodri Prys Jones	

PR announced that he had recently visited Mrs Swancott-Pugh and that she conveyed her kind regards to the members.

2. Declaration of Interest

None

3. Previous Minutes

Approved.

4. Matters Arising

- i) Sustainable Farming Scheme – response from the Access Forum to be discussed as item 11.
- ii) Lon Cwrt – Rhyd Yr Onnen Ddiweddaraf Ffordd di Dosbarth – item 8
Cwrt – Rhyd Yr Onnen update on the Unclassified Road issue item 8

5. Correspondence

None

6. Update on the Animal Welfare Bill

PR announced that unfortunately the Westminster government had decided to 'pull the plug' on the Private Members bill as appraised by Rob Taylor.

RT was unable to attend but had received an email response - below:

10th June – “Unfortunately there is no longer an update as the Kept Animals Bill has been scrapped by the Government without warning. A Private Members Bill was attempted in Parliament which had progressed to the House of Lords but that too was scrapped due to the calling of a general election. So I apologise that there is no longer an update on this subject. This is extremely frustrating as the mat keeps getting pulled from underneath me so there will be no update until the next government is in place and the dust had settled. I will let you know if there is any movement but it could be some months or years and I may be retired by then.”

PR stated that was disappointing as this had been an important piece of work as the proposed legislation addressed the issue of dogs in the countryside and stock.

If RT indicated some movement then he would update the members accordingly.

HP added that hopefully something would emerge after the new Government was in place.

AE commented that the Police had been working with Liverpool University to be able to identify DNA from a canine suspected of sheep attacks. Hopefully, this may make dog owners more responsible if this became a regular method of identifying animals who were responsible for attacking stock.

7. Update on the work of the Warden Service in the south of the NP

David P Jones introduced himself as the National Parks Head Warden for the south area.

Since his last presentation it had been a great deal busier in sites such as Llyn Tegid, Dol Idris and Ty Nant. But has not been as overwhelming as they had experienced immediately after Covid. This year's weather overall has not been poorer over the season. Disappointingly they had experienced the usual antisocial issues such as fly camping, litter, damage to trees, fires, and inappropriate lakeside camping.

The clearway order for Llangower had now been completed by Gwynedd Council and hopefully this would help to stop people parking on the road and make life easier for residents.

HP asked where then would people park as they needed a parking area.

DPJ stated that they together with GC were looking at other parking potential. They were also planning to meet the Llangower community Council to explore what additional parking potential there was in the area. He was aware that the railway development in the town is to create additional parking which may displace some of the Llangower road parking.

HJ asked if this was the lake railway.

AT mentioned that the railway parking would be in the town and it may displace some of those cars previously parking along the Llangower road.

DPJ confirmed that the intention was to have all the parking in the station parking.

DE mentioned that we may still have a camper van issue.

PR asked members if they would like an update from the Bala Lake Railway spokesman – Julian Birley.

DE mentioned that they were having an open day next month.

Agreed that PR ask them to update the members on the development if they were able to attend the next meeting – 29 10 24.

DPJ continued and stated that the path pitching work on Mynydd Moel was continuing and more material will be flown in soon to enable another section to be completed.

In Llanywchlyn they had tarmaced Llwybr Y Cei.

Additional work had been undertaken in the Farchynys woodland and the path had now been waymarked. This was also a Dark Skies site and a new metal seat had been installed so that people could view the sky.

Works were ongoing (by the Warden Service) to refurbish the disabilities route in Dol Idris and to renew the surface to bring it back into good condition for wheelchairs or mobility scooters. This was one of the NP's promoted all ability routes.

New steps had been installed in Llanycil to make it safer and more convenient for fisherman and visitors wishing to use LLyn Tegid.

They were continually working with Gwynedd Council and they were constantly replacing stiles with gates wherever possible – and he thanked GLE and his team for their continued assistance with this.

They had re assessed Taith Ardudwy¹ and some works were required in some places and also to replace some signage. This route may need to be given additional profile by the NP but it was always a community led project.

PR added that Taith Ardudwy does have its own website and the Community Councils have ownership of this and this was a popular route.

A main advantage of this was that it was designed as a sustainable route. People could walk this as far as they wished on any given day and then drop off at various places and catch the train to return to their start point rather than use two cars.

DJP added that they had appointed a seasonal Warden for the south of the NP and a seasonal lakeside Warden at Llyn Tegid.

HR asked if the Red Bull event was within the NP.

HP stated that it was.

He added that this was a well organised event which showed the NP at its best and attracted competitors and visitors from far and wide and this was a good advert for the Dinas Mawddwy area in particular which did not usually host large events unlike the north of the NP.

HP added that Huw could compete next year!

AE added that he was also grateful to the NP and GC for their work on changing some of the furniture on RoW. Many people had commented that it was far easier to get through gates and not stiles. This was good for users within the local communities, visitors and also for landowners.

GD commented that there had been a sign erected recently, she thought by the NP, in Llangelynnin which was pointing the wrong way.

GLE commented that any roadside way markers were the responsibility of GC's Rights of Way Department. He would look into this.

8. Cwrt – Rhyd Yr Onnen — Update on the Unclassified Road (UCR).

PR announced that this UCR had been closed by GC due to its condition. The middle section is in a very poor condition on the Cwrt side.

¹ Taith Ardudwy (2010) was a coastal Community Councils initiative (between Talsarnau and Barmouth) to create a sustainable mid-level walking trail along the coast. This is split into 3 lengths and users can walk one length and return via the train to their start point. It Taith Ardudwy has its own website for information. The NP assisted with its development and its upkeep when required.
[Taith Ardudwy Way](#)

There had been plans in place to helicopter lift material into that area. The helicopter costs for the day were to be funded by GLASS (Green Lane Association) with the National Park supervising the operation. However, this had not been possible due to various difficulties. This was disappointing and GLASS have now served Gwynedd Highways with a notice to repair. Hence the temporary closure that is in place.

GLE confirmed this was under a temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for 18 months.

PR would inquire with Gwynedd Highways to ascertain what their places were and report back to the LAF members.

He had seen recently some 4 × 4 users were still using this route and ignoring the closure even though a TRO is in place. The route is also subject to an agreed voluntary one way system running from Rhyd Y Onnen o Cwrt – i.e. west to east. This was to ease congestion and to avoid large groups trying to get past each other and causing considerable land damage.

He showed some slides of users on the track which is subject to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).

It is still used by motorcycles in either direction which is less problematic.

AE commented that in such circumstances it was difficult how landowners could keep their land in good agricultural and environmental condition.

HP added that if landowners had a land inspection then would be penalised for noncompliance due to its condition which is due those off road users and bad practice.

PR added that it was very frustrating that this did not happen when all the arrangements were in place. He was not at liberty to say why.

GD asked why this could not be done by simply clearing the drains with a machine.

PR replied that this was more than a side drain – although many had been blocked deliberately. This was a peat area required about 100t of stone to fill in the section damaged.

GLE added that over the years low maintenance works such as drain clearance would have helped considerably. Many of these routes are in places where undertaking the most basic maintenance is difficult. This route was in poor condition already and it would require significant work to bring it up to standard.

There are several routes in similar condition in the south of the NP and Highways resources were already thin and unsurfaced roads were not a priority.

DPJ added that the off roaders enjoyed these conditions but it was problematic for landowners and other users.

GD added that there were many people that visited the area specifically for this purpose.

PR would contact Highways to see what the current position was and report back.

9. Update on Eryri's Recreation Strategy – now renamed Recreation Position Statements -2024-2029

PR informed the members that this document, after 2 years in the making, had finally been concluded and was available to the public via their NP website.

The name change had been recommended by our reviewing consultant who did the final edit.

It was important that this document was aligned to the objectives relating to access and recreation in the Eryri Management Plan.

It gave the NP's perspective on the various recreational activities that occurred within its boundaries and the challenges this brought. The document contained 'activity statements' which encompassed all activities commonly undertaken in the NP. i.e. dog walking, events (of all types), cycling, climbing, walking, gorge walking, fishing, cultural and historic tours. It was the NP's role to give advice and exert influence to encourage best practice with sustainable outcomes.

Examples of event positive management included litter and waste control, supervision, safety, noise, drones, nighttime events management, parking. He stressed that in terms of events *per se* it was the small groups that were most problematic as often they were not professionally run.

There was also a section within the document which referred to off roading. It was important that the NP recognises that some routes such as UCR's have legal rights and they were ready to work with user groups to make routes more sustainable. But in terms of illegal activities they would be ready to act accordingly with other agencies to deter this.

AE asked of this meant working with NWP Rural Crimes Teams.

PR replied that it would when necessary.

HP mentioned that drones were a nuisance and this also caused them some security concerns.

GD added that she had recent experience of drones flying over their yard which was private land.

PR mentioned that drone advice was on the NP website and that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) website information² was also useful.

Importantly this document included important themes such as the Miles Without stiles and Least Restrictive Options philosophy which the LAF were familiar with. This sets the standard for the NP when considering new or improved access provisions and which have been adopted by all UK NP`s.

The camper van and mobile home information had also been included in the document as recommended by the Authority and which also stated that they would work with Gwynedd Council to promote their Ayers/Arosfan³ project.

Hard copies in both languages were available this evening and was also on the NP website.

10. Update on the work programme of the Rights Of Way Section of Gwynedd Council.

GLE introduced himself as the Team Leader for the Rights of Way section within Gwynedd Council.

There is 3800km of Rights of Way (RoW) in Gwynedd and many were highly popular. Gwynedd`s area also covered Arfon and Pen Llyn which are outside the NP boundary.

HJ asked if the waymarking as a national standard.

GLE stated that it was a nationally agreed and legal standard that applied to all local authorities.

They were also responsible for the upkeep of the legal definitive map which was the legal map for all Rights of Way in the area – and common to all local authorities with Rights of Way responsibilities. This indicated the location of PRow, their status and its community number. This was an important document and is updated when legal changes are made to any PRow. This is done following prescribed process for Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO`s) such as diversions, additions, extinguishments (rare) or upgrading.

Some changes can be subject to appeal and in some of the more contentious cases may end in a Public Inquiry if necessary. There may be some mapping of PRow in the past which may have been incorrect but most are correct.

² [Introduction to drone flying and the UK rules | Civil Aviation Authority \(caa.co.uk\)](https://www.caa.co.uk/Information-for-you/Drone-flying/Introduction-to-drone-flying-and-the-UK-rules)

³Cyngor Gwynedd is developing 4 specific sites for motorhomes to stay overnight.

HJ asked if a path had not been used for years if it was then not a RoW through lack of use.

GLE stressed that this was a popular myth and a PRow cannot be deleted or extinguished other than by legal order, even if a path has not been walked for many years and appears out of use, It still remains a PRow legally.

HP mentioned that the LAF had discussed the procedures and associated costs with making changes to PRow in the past. These views had also been expressed during the Access Reform Group (ARAG) meetings prior to Covid. That was to simplify the processes and make it easier and more cost effective for local authorities to make changes.

GLE added that there was some considerable momentum prior to Covid to make changes to the PRow procedures to make it easier and reduce costs for local authorities and it was disappointing that after all the debate and recommendations nothing had changed.

It was also important to consider that if an alternative permissive line was provided on the ground as an alternative to any given PRow the original line of the PRow remained on the legal line.

HP added that if an alternative permissive path was provided then landowners could end up with two lines to contend with which wasn't the best outcome.

PR added that the LAF's, the Welsh Rights of Way Officers group and others had all recommended to WG that these changes were necessary.

HP commented that it may be useful to ask WG when they have Ministers in place following the election.

GLE continued - landowners have a responsibility for furniture but within the NP the NP frequently works with GC to assist many landowners.

He also explained that in a similar way to the NP they considered 'least restrictive options' wherever possible – but this should be balanced with the terrain in the area and what was possible but it was always preferable to exchange stiles for gates or kissing gates to make the network more convenient to as many users as possible. They also encouraged landowners to keep them in good condition as it was their responsibility to ensure that they were safe.

PR added that boundaries were sometimes problematic to ensure that stock – particularly sheep, did not mix so they paid particular attention to this issue. He added that it was important to consider that Equality Act did say that measures for least restrictive access should be considered but recognised that this should be where 'reasonably practicable'.

GLE added that they also had a significant number of older features within the PRow network such as traditional gates, stone stiles or slate step throughs and they should be kept wherever possible.

They also had some CRow access land to monitor outside the NP boundary such parcels in Llyn Peninsula, Barmouth, Corris & Blaenau Ffestiniog.

He explained that many Community Councils received an annual grant from GC towards the basic upkeep of PRow within their area and this was important to GC. There were also some private individuals also maintained some PRow within their land.

In terms of other structures such as bridges – these were a part of their infrastructure and they worked with other agencies where problems arise.

He added that there was a lot of information contained within GC website if people required more information about specific Rights of Way⁴.

HP asked if it was possible to share this link.

PR would add the link into the minutes but this was a very useful resource that he used frequently.

HP invited questions from the members.

AE asked if the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps were accurate and reliable for the public to use.

GLE replied that in general all PRow that were recorded on the Definitive Map were reflected on OS. When changes are made via the legal prescribed process then the OS are informed and they make the necessary changes made to their maps.

AE mentioned that it was always a concern that some local place names may be changed to artificial ones.

GLE commented that this was a challenge and they did receive some inquiries from time to time.

AE added that the National Park had set an important precedent in changing Snowdonia to Eryri.

PR added that this had been complicated by the fact that many climbing gulleys and routes had acquired various English names since climbing became a popular outdoor sport. But he was sure they could navigate this issue in some way. However the changing of place or location names was in his view inappropriate and insensitive. To their credit he had always found OS

⁴ [Link to Gwynedd Council Rights of Way Map.](#)
[Mapiau | Cyngor Gwynedd \(llyw. cymru\)](#)

very proactive regarding this issue and did use the Welsh versions of many hills, valleys and other features and the OS maps reflected this.

HJ commented that it was important that any locally known names were at least recorded.

AE added that this was an important piece of work.

HP cited some examples of very local names in his location and some distortions had occurred.

DPJ mentioned that Naomi Jones at the NP was running a project to collect and record these names in the Traws area.

GLE added that in some communities' certain paths had generic Welsh names as well as their usual ID as a PRow which was interesting and agreed that they should be recorded.

GD added that there were many names only known locally and that these should be recorded in some way.

DPJ mentioned that this was part of the projects remit.

PR added that he knew that there was a national project and that he had met with a local volunteer in Caernarfon who was also collecting field names.

HP thanked GLE for his time and interesting presentation.

11. Sustainable Farming Scheme – Forums response to Welsh Government's Consultation.

PR informed the members that following a subgroup meeting between the two LAF's a response to the paper had been submitted. It was important to note that the LAF's response could only be made about issues pertaining to access per se and no other subject.

He expressed disappointment that there was little in the paper concerning access or PRow when these were such important factors in land management.

Following their discussions he had put together some bullet points (see paper item 11) which highlighted the issues they wished to put to WG. He was also aware that some members had responded to this paper as private individuals.

It had also been difficult to use the questionnaire as this was only available online and there was no specific field to insert their comments so this had been inserted in the last question page – any other comments or observations.

He ran through the list of bullet points and hoped that some fundamental ideas would be at least considered by WG. It was also important that some mistakes made in previous agri – environmental schemes were not repeated. i.e. fencing blocking PRow, diverted PRow off their routes, poor or none (BS) standard furniture.

Any future farm projects should consider their effects on PRow and access land and also how joined up these can be with adjacent properties to ensure consistently.

They had also acknowledged that in some properties there were older outstanding issues in terms of PRow and they had made the point that whilst this should not preclude landowners from entering schemes there must be a commitment by all parties to resolve them within the life span of any scheme.

AE supported this approach and having a consistency between neighbouring landowners was an important point not only for RoW but for schemes.

12. Agenda items for next meeting

- i) SS response from the NP to this consultation.
- ii) Traws circular bridge.

13. Any other Business

- i) Letter to Leslie Griffiths AM regarding Traws Ranges munitions (item paper 13i)**

PR explained that he had put this in for information. Given that Natural Resources Wales had to apply to the LAF every 5 years for an access exclusion in that area which seemed non sensical when this was for public safety and where issues cannot be resolved.

He thought that it may be an idea to revisit this. As the CRow Act legislation stands all access land is in perpetuity and there is no mechanism to allow for removing parcels of land permanently even if they are a danger to the public.

Members agreed that we should revisit this and sent a similar worded letter to the Minister once the elections were concluded.

- ii) Visitor monitoring – update from PR on 2023 figures**

PR announced that they had recently concluded a sweep of their visitor counters across the NP. Although we did have some hardware issues they had still managed to glean some interesting statistics.

He showed slides of the figures for Cader Idris. Their count showed Dol Idris was in the region of 57,000 and the Ty Nant - Pony Path 18,000. It was interesting in that although they had small increases over recent years they

did not vary significantly. This was due to the fact that the parking provision for each side was limited. To compare Yr Wyddfa which was 580,000. It was also important to note that these were one way figures. So the footfall was actually double.

The season comparisons were also different on different paths. Typically Cader, Yr Wyddfa and the Ogwen valley were more spread out across the season (and subject to the vagaries of the weather). In comparison the Mawddach figures consistently dropped off very quick at the end of August including figures for cycles.

GD asked if the Mawddach counters where at the beginning of the route. From their feedback as holiday accommodation providers they knew that the liner route between Dolgellau and Barmouth was very popular with their clients.

PR stated that the counters were located at the busiest locations to enable a maximum count in high density places such as the Penmaenpool gate and at Morfa Mawddach car park end.

Llwybr Cynwch (Precipice) near Llanfachreth – Dolgellau showed a consistent trend – which was currently around 29,000 pa with a slight increase annually – 25,000 in 2014. This was a fairly remote location and remained popular with local people.

The post Covid `ripple` had also skewed the figures at that time. This showed that although number were significantly up this was squeezed into 3 months rather than 6-8 which created many issues and proved that our spare carrying capacity was very low. Added to this were all the other issues such as some antisocial and belligerent behaviour, fly camping, bad parking, litter and `waste`, fires and damage to trees, infrastructure – bins, parking areas and toilet blocks. This had been a stressful time for all NP staff.

PR stated that early indications for 2024 showed slightly lower trends but this may be down to poorer weather. He was not aware how any accommodation rules affected their statistics.

They had recently been offered a couple of new type of people counters by the NRW which they had agreed to test. These were by phone links.

DPJ mentioned that some authorities were using LoRaWan system to analyse statistics.

PR explained that this was a digital sensor arrangement. They had a considerable amount invested in what they had – they were in ground systems with a Blue Tooth connection. New systems were available but costs were an unknow and would require different software and hardware across the NP is they considered replacing them.

iii) Extra item:

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, ditches water courses 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.

GLE asked what the advantages were by dedicating the woodlands as access land.

PR stated that would guarantee access to the public and at the same time reduce the NP liabilities for natural features as preciously described.

HP asked if trees had been planted then was this a reduced liability as it was a man made feature. This may be more important in the future if landowners had to plant more trees under any scheme within any access land.

PR stated that HP had raised an interesting point. When trees are planted that area becomes non access land and is temporary 'excepted land' for 12 months. Following this period it then it reverts back to become fully access land.

The dedication process is a statutory procedure and is laid down in in regulations which dictate the dedications process (Sect 16 CRow). It is long winded and applications must be submitted to WG and involves a consultation process.

He asked members (through the Chair) if they had any thoughts on this and whether they would support this project.

HP asked for members opinions.

Agreed that members support this.

PR thanked the members and would keep them apprised.

14. Time and date of next meeting:

29th October 2024 – venue to be advised.

HP thanked all in attendance and for their respective contributions