



# Meeting Summary

**Title of** National Access Forum (NAFW 53) Meeting:

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**Date of Meeting:** 10 November 2015 10.30 – 13:00  
**Venue:** Youth Hostel Association  
 Cardiff Central, East Tyndall  
 St, Cardiff, CF10 4BB  
<http://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/cardiff-central>

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**Present:** Ruth Hall (NRW, Chair), Carys Drew (NRW, Secretariat), Mark Weston (BHS), Andrew Stumpf (Glandwr Cymru), Stuart France (CCC), Karen Anthony (CLBA), Claire Goodman (IPROW), Gwenda Owen (CTC), Tom Packham (Dwr Cymru), Bernard Griffiths (part) (FUW), Jean Rosenfeld (LAFs in Wales/CPRW), Duncan Green (LARA), Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU Cymru), Richard Neale (NT), Lyn Cadwallader (One Voice Wales), Beverley Penney (OSS), Rebecca Brough (Ramblers Cymru), Gwyn Smith (Sustrans), Mark Stafford-Tolley (WLGA), Rowland Pittard (YHA), Catrin Dellar (WG), Jont Bulbeck (NRW)

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**Apologies:** Janet Williams (BDS), Elfyn Jones (BMC), Charles de Winton (CLBA), David Evans (Elan Valley Trust), Ruth Rourke (IPROW/WROWMWG)\*  
 Rebecca Mattingley (Sports Wales), Kerry Thatcher (Visit Wales)  
 Paul Donovan (WATO), Richard Ball/Anthony Richards (Welsh National Parks)

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Item	Item	Action
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**No:**

**1. Welcome and Apologies.**

Ruth welcomed everyone to the meeting and to YHA Cardiff Central. Rowland Pittard, the YHA representative on the Forum would be presenting an item, and had advised that this was the 50<sup>th</sup> NAFW meeting he had attended.

Ruth noted, that the WG Green paper on access had been featured on BBC Countryfile, and congratulated Angela Chalton, Ramblers Cymru and Elfyn Jones, BMC who were interviewed.

Two new representatives were welcomed:

- Mark Stafford-Tolley would be representing Welsh Local Government Association (since Ian Dutch's retirement). Mark had attended NAFW in the past and is Chair of Wales

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Rights of Way Managers Working Group.

- Mr Lyn Cadwallader – representing One Voice Wales the national body for Town and Community Councils.

Apologies were noted and those attending as deputies were welcomed: Claire Goodman (IPROW), Rebecca Brough (Ramblers Cymru), and Karen Anthony (CLBA).

The actions from the previous meeting were noted as complete.

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## 2. Contributions from All

This item was taken early due to IT difficulties affecting the presentations.

Ruth Hall referred to the number of recent consultations from and on behalf of Welsh Government which were of interest to the Forum.

- **Welsh Government Green Paper on 'Improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation'.**

**Discussion points:**

- Catrin Dellar shared a number of points: The consultation closed on 2/10/15, typically such consultations receive a couple of hundred responses, in the case of this Green paper, close to 6,000 responses had been received. Since many of the responses were in template form this made them easier to deal with as one, whilst picking up any additional points. The WG team had sufficient resources to manage the response process. The resource implications for dealing with the outcomes of the consultation will ultimately be a matter for the future in WG as to how to address this matter.
- Overall, responses were widely positive in tone for current access and in relation to getting people into the countryside for outdoor

recreation. Two thousand responses were based on CTC template. NFU, FUW and Countryside Alliance had also provided several template responses. Due to the large numbers, the timetable for collation had been extended. The summary of responses would be issued in 2016, before the run into the next National Assembly elections. There had been positive interest from the Minister in the issues and the cross cutting matters in his portfolio.

- Catrin noted that with regard to the 'young person's version' a few responses were received, with some group responses from organisations working with or for young people, however she noted the need to improve engagement.
- The need to fit with improving wellbeing and the range of activities (caving had not be included in the WG paper or in NRW's consultation response) and whether or not responses had been received from health related stakeholders.
- Catrin Dellar noted that a few responses had been received from Doctors but that it was not clear at this stage how many had been received from Health Boards. The importance of links between recreational access and health and wellbeing was recognised in WG hence involvement in the Physical Activity Group, led by WG Sport and secretariat by the Health Department.
- Ruth Hall noted that NRW had just published it's health prospectus and that this was available on the NRW website <http://naturalresources.wales>
- Ruth Hall said the high number of responses and significant interest was notable and it would be interesting to follow the party manifestos for next year. She offered the assistance of the NAFW as a group that could help WG consider further consider the future in light of responses to the Green Paper consultation. The NRW response to the consultation was available at: <http://naturalresources.wales/media/5627/improving-opportunities-to-access-the-outdoors-for-responsible-recreation-org.pdf>

- **Draft Rights of Way Guidance**

It was noted that the NRW response to the consultation was online at:

<http://naturalresources.wales/media/5554/guidance-for-local-authorities-on-public-rights-of-way.pdf>

- **Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan Guidance**

The targeted consultation was open until 27<sup>th</sup> November 2015 and comments should be sent by email to:

[ROWIP.Guidance.Review@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:ROWIP.Guidance.Review@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

NRW is leading the development of the Guidance on behalf of WG. A NAFW subgroup had been held recently, the note of which would be issued imminently. The intention was to issue the Guidance as advice to WG by the end of February 2016.

**Discussions points:**

- The need to deal with the consultations in an integrated way – whilst they are related, WG needs to address them separately.
- Lack of local authorities' resources is a concern.

**Other updates and written Contributions were then considered:**

**NRW – Board update**

Ruth Hall provided an update about recent changes to the NRW Board. NRW had a new Chair (Diane McCrea) and Vice Chair (Madeleine Harvard).

**Wellbeing of Future Generations:**

Ruth noted that there is a consultation out about the indicators being proposed to measure delivery of the Act which may be of interest to Forum members. Further information was available

online and included a useful explanatory leaflet and an animation about the Act.

The consultation ends 11/1/16

## **YHA**

Rowland Pittard noted the ongoing NRW work on the LIFE Natura 2000 project, NRW would provide further update at the next NAFW meeting in March.

## **LAFs**

Jean Rosenfeld asked if the theme of routes being promoted with Visit Wales on NRW's own managed land indicates how NRW will work in future – i.e. not beyond the boundaries.

Jont Bulbeck noted that NRW had previously promoted 20 routes using partner information.

## **IPROW**

Claire Goodman – emphasised the pressure on local authority resources. She noted the divergences between English and Welsh access law and IPROW members would like to see these differences documented. The compulsory requirement for land searches (CON 29) to now include information about public rights of way was welcome, this would come into place from 4/7/2016. IPROW welcomed this despite some resource implications. Cuts are biting hard and there were many cases of staff having their roles significantly widened.

## **WLGA**

Mark Stafford-Tolley agreed with Claire Goodman and also noted the landscape review issued. He noted a need for greater collaboration between, local authorities, national park authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in their work e.g. in RDP funding bids but also in everyday functions where appropriate.

## **LARA**

Duncan Green noted the CON 29 case in Oxfordshire where an ancient road was said to be private despite investigations into status. This judgement made clear that local authorities should include considerations of possible rights.

With regard to the CROW Act 2000 cut-off date of 2026, the Herefordshire LAF had held a subgroup on lost ways looking at existing highway records and the range of sources of information. It appeared that there were lots of gaps, and many footpaths and bridleways appear to be safe but terminate on unrecorded highways.

## **OSS**

Beverley Penney noted the need for local authorities and others in the public sector to note the public's interest in making resource decisions. She picked up the point of NRW Board members and suggested that new members be invited to future meetings of National Access Forum

**Action 53.1** NRW Chair be invited to future NAFW meeting

Ruth  
Hall /  
Carys  
Drew

## **BHS**

Mark Weston flagged up a number of points in the Green Paper that were of concern and highlighted items in his written report, including the self-closing gate trial and the results of the national equestrian survey.

## **CTC**

Gwenda Owen noted that CTC had encouraged responses to the Green Paper through its 'Trails for Wales' Campaign. This was a first for CTC working together and attracting input from people who visit Wales. CTC wanted to see access resource exploited in a sustainable and responsible way.

### **One Voice Wales**

Lyn Cadwallader highlighted the startling cuts ahead of local government in Wales, some £900million over the next few years. With regard to the role of Town and Community Councils, there were huge issues with regard to landownership and mapping and risks involved of double taxation if Community Councils start spending on local authority duties. There would be important roles in the Public Service Boards where NRW would be there to represent a range of groups.

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### **3. The Youth Hostel Association and its impact**

Rowland

Pittard welcomed the Forum to Cardiff Central hostel and its new conference facilities.

He provided a brief history of YHA, a charity in England and Wales, which is now 86 years old. As a charity all of its income is reinvested into its work; such as the network of facilities and properties and delivering work with other voluntary organisations. The current network consisted of some 197 hostels (including enterprise and affiliate hostels), twenty eight of these in Wales. Most hostels are concentrated in National Parks and YHA has close links with the Campaign for National Parks including the MOSAIC project.

YHAs charitable objective is:

“To help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside and appreciation of the cultural values of towns and cities, particularly by providing Youth Hostels or other accommodation for them in their travels, and thus to promote their health, recreation and education.”

Rowland also shared YHAs Mission and Vision, and its work to deliver these. The results of the YHAs work in 2014/15 was set out in the

recently launched report 'Our Impact: A look back at a year of positive change 2015' available online:

<http://www.yha.org.uk/sites/default/files/YHA-Impact-Review-2015.pdf>

**Discussions points included:** □ Occupancy rates: there are some patterns in terms of busy and quiet periods.

- The extent to which YHA is funded by membership or other e.g.

grant funding, and that busier hostels in effect subsidise quieter hostels.

- How YHA balances having hostels in cities as well as in national parks. Cities, such as Cardiff provide a link to the countryside and help deliver the YHAs added objective of 'Exploration of wider horizons of culture and location'

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#### 4. The access work of the National Trust

Richard Neale, noted that access and recreation is very much ingrained in the work of the National Trust (NT) and he gave information about the approach which has been taken over the last 20 years. There was an increasing trend to be involved in activities and in outdoor work.

The theory behind the current approach taken was led by Dame Helen Ghosh the current Director General.

The diagram illustrating the principles of the Land Outdoors and Nature programme was explained further with a quote from Peter

Nixon, Director of Conservation.

“...In short – nature is under the cosh. Nothing presents a bigger threat to our core purpose as a charity. Our vision and the purpose of the *Land Outdoors and Nature* programme is to have landscapes that are healthy, beautiful rich in history and wildlife, enjoyed by people – and are productive as a result.”

Richard noted that access cuts-across all the work streams to a greater or lesser extent. He demonstrated the different types of work and management undertaken by focussing on some examples from the 'Experience and Activities' and 'Coast' work streams



being delivered across Wales. The different management approaches enabling NT to direct investment were categorised as:

- Active (red): where management included staff, activities, facilities and car parking,
- Explore (orange) where there were planned experiences, different options available including easy walks, possibly seasonal staff, car parking and facilities.
- Wild (green): where visitors would be expected to have their own maps and where NT intervention was minimal.

In terms of the Coast, Richard noted that public awareness of NT places on the coast was low, and as such a lot of activity had taken place recently to do with raising awareness and getting people involved. NT were increasingly working beyond landownership borders in order to improve visitor experience, Rhossili was an example where the carpark had been acquired for this reason and this site received the biggest number of visitors in Wales.

Richard noted that as a result of coastal access work in England, NT Wales had opportunities over the next year to work with Welsh Government and NRW to improve coastal access in Wales. He shared a number of examples of NT management in response to coastal adaptation.

Activities included: Camping and facilitating people's experience of this, Coasteering, which in certain places had reached levels where there was competition for space, resulting in noise and disturbance. There was a need to manage activity, and with funding from Visit Wales, the Coasting Concordat for Pembrokeshire was developed, this is in place on three busy sites and the first review of the outdoor charter for organised commercial groups had been very well received, it featured an online calendar to help manage activity. Sport Wales were increasing activities at National Trust properties.

**Discussions points included:**

- The extent to which NT considers the wider rights of way network when developing paths on own land.
- The opportunity for NT local rangers to increase links with

Local Access Forums, particularly given the role of LAFs in Rights of Way Improvement Plans and the opportunities for taking an integrated approach to access management.

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## 5. What does our manifesto say about us?

Rebecca Brough started by noting that Ramblers Cymru has around 6000 members in Wales, 44 walking groups, 24 volunteer maintenance groups.

Their Manifesto *Wales for Walking* was launched in July 2015. It reflects members concerns and their vision for the walking culture of Wales - for Wales to be the best country in the world for walkers.

The Manifesto contains three key themes:

- Helping people find their feet;
- a country designed for walking;
- taking a fresh look at outdoor recreation laws. Within these are thirteen 'asks' of Government and public bodies in together with the actions Ramblers Cymru will take to move each issue forward.

The value of the existing network underpins the messages throughout.

The asks are included in the following areas:

1. Getting people more physically active through walking:  
Lets Walk Cymru – want more support for development of successful scheme, from Health Boards, local authorities, and

GPs. Ramblers will look for ways to link our walking groups to Lets walk groups

2. Helping more young people and families enjoy the outdoors: Education and skills – rights and responsibilities in national curriculum. Ramblers more family walking packs; Duke of Edinburgh Award opportunities; Schools partnerships
3. Linking communities to each other and their surroundings: useable paths to link to green space and coast; role of community councils and community groups; more than active travel. Ramblers have republished Paths for People leaflet, and will look to establish closer Local access Forum links
4. Helping people find out about the paths they can walk: Better online mapping, showing permissive paths; cross compliance with CAP payments. Rambler will lobby and research opportunities to influence CAP
5. Delivering the improvements the path network needs: Importance of ROWIPS and LAFs; continued funding, LAF monitoring role in ROWIPs; revitalise LAFs. Ramblers to monitor health of LAFs and press for more support
6. Keeping paths open and easy to use: 24 Ramblers volunteer footpath teams – we want all-Wales framework linked to skills agenda. Ramblers to lead and push forward these discussions
7. Treasuring the Wales Coast Path  
Want long term commitment and powers used to bring path closer to coast. Ramblers will support through WCP communication group
8. Take a fresh look at outdoor recreation laws:  
Want visionary and innovative green paper. Ramblers will use business plans, manifesto and 10-yr vision to push for change
9. Making sure no footpaths are lost:

Want more support for clearing backlog of case and no 2026 cut off for recording lost ways. Ramblers will monitor and press for resources

The WG Green paper 'Improving opportunities to access the outdoors for responsible recreation' was launched the day after the Manifesto, and Ramblers Cymru's response to the Green Paper – 'Freedom to explore with the knowledge to protect', took the manifesto asks to next level.

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Rebecca finished by emphasising what the Ramblers Cymru manifesto says about them. They want to:

- celebrate and protect what we have
- educate people about the outdoors and how to access it responsibly
- see improvements to access
- work in partnership with others

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## **6. Rights of Way Improvement Plan Funding Programme (ROWIP): Achievements of 2014/15**

Carys Drew, ran through the latest reports and highlights from last year's programme of work. The ROWIP Funding Programme is Welsh Government funding, administered on their behalf by NRW. It helps authorities to deliver their ROWIP Actions, and in doing so to meet the locally determined priorities. From 2008-2016 WG provided £10.9million to authorities; of this £1million was allocated in 2014/15.

Authorities provide summary workplans at the start of the year and then more detailed reporting at the end of the year, NRW then collates this into a number of reports. Information is provided about

- Types of work and detail
- Who is intended to benefit
- How work is carried out

The range of work that can be included in the ROWIP, can be funded through the ROWIP Funding Programme. Types of work are categorised and can be grouped as follows as works that:

- directly affect user experience
- encourage use and promote access
- contribute to management of access

In 2014/5 £760,505 of the funding was used to improve existing access on the ground.

Carys shared a number of 'before and after' pictures to demonstrate all these types of improvements, and noted that, as was the trend over previous years, more than half of projects are intended to benefit more than one user group (multi-benefit or general benefit to all users).

The reports from 2014/15 will be available shortly and further information is available online:

<http://naturalresources.wales>

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## 7. AOB

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Andrew Stumpf noted that the Wales Bill is going through discussions, it was currently hard to see what would be included with regards to reserve powers. Other bodies may like to see this and feed into debate through committees.

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## 8. Date of next mee ting

The next meeting dates and venues were confirmed as:

- 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 (Maes y Ffynnon, Bangor) (post meeting update – now being held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016)
- 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016 (Mid Wales)
- 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016 (YHA Cardiff Central)

All to note that meeting dates and papers will now be available on the NRW website:

<http://naturalresources.wales>

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