



Meeting Summary

Title of Meeting: **National Access Forum (NAFW 54)**

Date of Meeting: 15 March 2016
10.30 – 13:00

Venue: Natural Resources Wales
Maes y Ffynnon
Penrhosgarnedd
Bangor , Gwynedd
LL57 2DW

Present: Ruth Hall (NRW, Chair), Howard Davies, (NRW, Board Member) Mark Weston (BHS), Elfyn Jones (BMC), Charles de Winton (CLBA), Bernard Griffiths (FUW), Jean Rosenfeld (LAFs in Wales/CPRW), Catherine Williams (WATO), Rowland Pittard (YHA), Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU Cymru), John Watkins (WG), Jont Bulbeck (NRW), Joe Roberts (NRW), Susan Jackson (NRW), Jerry Herbert (Land Access & Recreation Association), Peter Rutherford (Welsh National Parks), Max Grant (OSS), Angela Charlton (Ramblers Cymru) , Adrian Walls (IPROW), Laura Lewis Glandwr Cymru), Mark Stafford – Tolley (WLGA) Richard Neale (National Trust)

Observers: Quentin Grimley (NRW), Rachel Parry (NRW), Arthur Lee (Disabled Ramblers) , John Cuthbertson (Disabled Ramblers) , Rob Armstrong (Trial Riders Fellowship), Hedd Pugh (NFU Cymru)

Apologies: Carys Drew (NRW, Secretariat), Steve Raynor (Canoe Wales), Andrew Stumpf (Glandwr Cymru), Stuart France (CCC), Catrin Dellar (WG), Gwyn Smith (Sustrans), Tom Packham (Dwr Cymru), Lyn Cadwallader (One Voice Wales) , Michelle Peters (British Driving Association) , Ruth Rourke (IPROW), David Evans (Elan Valley Trust), Kerry Thatcher (Visit Wales), Chris Tomley (Land Access & Recreation Associates) Paul Donovan (WATO)

Item No:	Item	Action
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1. Welcome & Apologies

Ruth Hall extended a special welcome to Howard Davies a 2nd Board Member with interest for NRW who had been appointed instead of Andy Middleton. Ruth also welcomed John Cuthbertson and Arthur Lee from the Disabled Ramblers, who would be presenting a piece about their organisation as an application to join the NAFW. Ruth advised on the process: that the Disabled Ramblers would be asked to leave the room for the Forum to discuss and make its decision.

Ruth also welcomed Catherine Williams representing WATO, who would also be presenting an item about her organisation's work.

Forum members who have yet to present an item were encouraged to do so at future meetings and to contact Carys Drew if you would like to do this.

Apologies were noted [see above].

Deputies were welcomed:

- Adrian Walls, standing in for Ruth Rourke and representing: Institute of Public Rights of Way Officers (IPROW)
- Jerry Herbert, standing in for Chris Tomley and representing: Land Access and Recreation Association.

2. **The Green Paper and what's next**

John Watkins, Welsh Government

Welsh Government issued a [Green Paper] consultation in 2015 on Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation.

John Watkins set out the background to the issuing of Welsh Government's consultation paper. The consultation could be summarised as covering the following 4 areas:

- 1) Reforming procedures (making improvements to administration)
- 2) Removing restrictions
- 3) Revising access
- 4) New Rights and responsibilities

Since the consultation closed, Welsh Government have been analysing and summarising the nearly 6000 responses they received. This was one of the largest responses to a consultation issued by Welsh Government. The Welsh Government also had increased viewings on their website; over all it had been a positive exercise.

John summarised the key points from their analysis of the responses from the consultation. [The full information paper John referred to during the meeting can be downloaded from:

<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/consultation/160324-access-outdoor-recreation-cons-summary-en.pdf>]

Any decisions on future actions will be for the next Welsh Government based on a business case to be developed by Welsh Government officials. To inform the business case, evidence gathering would take place during 2016-17 to assess the implications and associated costs of possible changes to legislation or other actions. This work would include looking at the research of other organisations.

Alongside this work another priority is to ensure that as and when local authority reforms are brought forward, recreational access carried out by authorities is positively addressed e.g. in relation to ROWIPs, LAFs and other boundary related duties and powers.

Discussion Points:

The Welsh Government's public rights of way guidance that has been under development will now be issued early in the next Assembly term.

The opportunities there could be for private landowners / farmers from legislative changes are currently under discussion. However, it is too early to say what reform would look like and therefore to assess the likely impacts on landholders. However WG do want to look at what potential there is to reduce burdens on them.

Despite appearances to the contrary, there is cross-department working in relation to increasing levels of physical activity in Wales. This includes work between Ministers and Departments, and involves various internal Government working groups.

In relation to concerns about the resourcing of recreational access John Watkins responded that Welsh Government has provided significant funding over several years. However, future public spending will be a matter for the next Welsh Government.

Ruth Hall offered the continued support of the Forum to Welsh Government in relation to developing and communicating about recreational access legislative and other change. John welcomed the offer of support.

Action: 54.1 Jont Bulbeck to provide a summary of the analysis of responses provided by John to the Forum JB

NB: as noted above, since the meeting Welsh Government has issued its 'Summary Paper of Responses' to the green paper consultation which can be accessed here:
<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/consultation/160324-access-outdoor-recreation-cons-summary-en.pdf>

3. Wales Adventure Tourism Organisations (WATO) and the Year of Adventure

Catherine Williams, WATO

Because of the presentation format, for the full presentation Catherine will separately circulate the slides used.

Catherine explained that WATO (Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation) was made up of 3 organisations, these are :

- Snowdonia Active
- Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group
- South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group

In addition WATO is seeking to establish an equivalent group to cover the mid-Wales area.

Catherine summarised the work of the 3 organisations in relation to:

- Communication
- Marketing & Publicity
- Sustainability

Each group has an Environmental Charter Group and covers how they work and the messages they provide to participants in relation to responsible recreation, respect for people and the environment. The groups are supported by and work closely with Visit Wales and other tourism interests.

Snowdonia Active are particularly focused on working with VW on their promotional 'Year of Adventure' (YoA). The YoA aims to take people on an adventure in places they would not normally expect to go. The campaign provides an opportunity for activity providers and other businesses to showcase what they have to offer. The year will bring together and promote a series of activities through the year, The Deputy Minister launched the Year at a public event.

Snowdonia Active also works with communities (e.g. at Llyn Padarn), on development of website information, taster sessions for different activities and related promotional work.

Pembroke Coastal Forum has pioneered the Pembrokeshire Marine Code and it is hoped this approach will be developed elsewhere e.g. in North Wales.

South Wales Activity Providers Group is more focused on bringing together activity providers. They have also focused on ways to work more sustainably e.g. to avoid and reduce their impacts in sensitive areas, such as the Waterfalls area of the Brecon Beacons, through a training programme.

WATO meet 4 times a year, and key proposals for Welsh Government action will be presented to the Senedd on the 29th April 2016 to raise the profile of the outdoor sector and the benefits it provides to health and wellbeing and the environment.

WATO also offer guidance on accommodation accreditation with sustainable operators with good customer care before they can be accredited by Visit Wales.

It was noted that WATO are seeking to cover mid-Wales. They are involved with the Ecodyfi Biosphere project which could provide an opportunity to do so. However, there are a number of separate organisations covering smaller areas that currently have their own marketing teams. There is therefore work to do about how to fill the gaps that exist.

Action 54.2: Catherine to provide a listing of activity/accommodation providers linked to WATO and circulate the presentation slides to Forum members. CF

Action 54.3: Peter Rutherford - to send a copy of the Brecon template. PR

4. Countryside Codes and Guidance: update on work in progress

Joe Roberts, NRW

Joe updated the Forum on the following areas of the Countryside Codes work:

- Dog Walking Code
- Trail Users Code
- Guidance Review

Each of these areas have individual reports that will be made available to the Forum.

Dog Walking Code

The new dog walking code has been issued to support the cross boarder information workings. However the work needs to convert the messages into positive behaviour changes e.g. through nudges and other interventions. Work includes:

Ynys Las NNR - monitoring interventions to see if the new codes were having any effect in relation to issues with dog muck. These included:

- GPS locators for recording and monitoring
- New and improved signage

Signs were improved to include information about

1. Poo bin locations
2. Distance between bins

There was a 50% reduction due to the 1st intervention and an 85% reduction in dog fouling in the 2nd intervention.

The signage was also improved by making it simpler to read, cutting down on text and making messages memorable and unique.

Trail Users Code

The need for such a code was raised by this Forum and LAFs in Wales. The aim is to inform and educate trail users, whether it is 'Wheel, Heel or Hoof'.

The scope of the work is to include:

- Development of a code for the use of linear routes
- Different legitimate activities, including what people can do where
- Establishment of a Code Working Group
- Provision of a draft code to the NAFW
- A 12 week consultation of stakeholders

The structure of the code will include:

- Detailed professional guidance
- General code – with clear messages for users
- Interpretation, communication & education – development of simple, targeted messages and interventions

The aim is to provide the final code by September 2016.

LIFE N2K Thematic Plans

The NAFW provided advice to the development of the thematic plans at the Forum meeting in Welshpool in 2015. Joe provided an update about the recreation and access priorities emerging as a result of that work.

High Priority actions

- Developed consistent methodologies and use of evidence in decision making
- Research into the impacts of recreation and how to mitigate the problems caused
- Frame work to implement actions 1 & 2
- Use of information in strategic plans - of NRW and other organisations
- Ongoing management of access
- Codes/ Guidance/ Education good practices and communications

Medium Priority Actions

- Linking into Welsh Governments Green Paper and
- Piloting on N2K sites

It was noted that the LIFE project had now finished. Taking forward the outputs and recommendations would be mainstreamed within NRW, but subject to available resources.

Review of NRW Recreation and Access Guidance

Joe reported on the findings of a consultation of NRW's stakeholders about its current R&A related guidance. The review will inform what guidance the organisation provides in the future.

A web consultation was carried out, including invites to NAFW members, LAFs and local authorities. 64 responses were received.

For guidance aimed at professional audiences the strongest demand was for guidance on PROW and open access legislation. On the other hand there was a low demand for guidance about event planning.

There was a strong preference for guidance provided through the web.

The priority for spatial information was in relation to open access mapping and open access restrictions. There was a demand for improving the provision of PROW information. There was a low demand for guidance on health and well-being and recreational participation.

NRW's public facing guidance was considered to less effective overall. Of these the Countryside Code was considered more effective.

Key conclusions:

- Provide guidance online
- Provide links to other relevant guidance – don't duplicate
- Priority content includes access legislation and access infrastructure

Discussion points:

In discussion it was acknowledged that NRW could use social and other media much better e.g. to inform, and target guidance at particular groups of stakeholders.

It was noted that R&A professionals, activity providers and users also need access and guidance for other information NRW holds, notably about SSSIs, SPAs and SACs – including boundaries and Potentially Damaging Operations [PDOs]. For activity providers this would also help to inform them about where they undertake their activities and for training staff.

Action 54.4: Joe Roberts to circulate web links and/or the reports referred to in his updates as and when available.

JR

5. Disabled Ramblers (DR) – the work of the Disabled Ramblers' & application for membership of NAFW

The slides from the presentation will be made available on the NAFW section of the NRW web site pages.

John Cuthbertson, Vice Chair of DR gave a presentation of the work that the Disabled Ramblers group do and how it allowed people with disabilities to access the countryside, even if on a mobility scooter.

The group gives its members a sense of achievement, enjoyment, social, mental and physical benefit. It allows them to meet like-minded people and enjoy the countryside. They currently hold approx. 30 rambles per year and which 20-30 people join. They complete risk assessments, write reports and promote all their rambles. Often they will advise on infrastructure allowing mobility scooters to access different areas. They are a completely self-sufficient group providing all amenities that are required on a ramble.

One of the issues is that many gates cannot be opened from the scooters, but correct designs and installation, or correctly positioning RADAR keys on gates, would allow this to happen. A full report of work by the BHS about better access gates will be available in April for NAFW to view.

DR have put their routes on to the Viewranger App under the 'Walking With Wheels' label.

Ruth then asked the Disabled Ramblers representatives to leave the room while the members of NAFW decided their application.

Following a short discussion, members agreed unanimously for the Disabled Ramblers to become members of the Forum.

Action 54.5: Disabled Ramblers to be formally added as members of the Forum and included in all future Forum business. CD

6. Contributions from all & any other business

Members shared highlights from their written updates about their organisation's work

Elfyn Jones from BMC advised of their cloud based fundraising campaign that had been set up called 'Mend Our Mountains'. The funding raised would be split between 8 upland path projects that were in urgent need of repair. Currently £13,127 had been raised since the launch on the previous day [14th March 2016] but the target was £100,000. The campaign had rewards such as a walking experience with well-known outdoor personalities and mountaineers.

Jean reported about a recent CPRW meeting about health and access in rural areas given high level access. They were seeking to influence health boards to recognise and support the benefits of recreational activity.

Richard Neale (National Trust) said that NT had been invited to attend a meeting of the LAF Chairs in Wales and was looking to work more closely with Local Access Forums.

Charles de Winton advised that Brecon Beacons have been discussing handing back their ROW work to Powys and other constituent local authorities due to lack of resources and would like to register this concern given the importance of access within the National Parks. It was noted that the decision had been deferred for at least the coming financial year. There was further discussion around the implications of reducing resources and the threat to PROW and recreational access services in local authorities [not just National Parks]. Jean Rosenfeld noted that this reflects the tendency to consider PROW to be a cost rather than an asset.

Rowland Pittard (YHA) wished to register the YHA's concern and disappointment that NRW's open access and other interactive access mapping is no longer available. He noted that YHA [and many others] had contributed information to the CCW Outdoor Wales onLine [OWoL] access mapping and the YHA had provided access to the mapping in the YHA's hostels. Several other members, including RL-D of NFU, AC (Ramblers Cymru and JR (LAFs' representative), also voiced their concerns and their hope it can be resolved soon. A number of organisations also stated their intention to write to NRW about their concerns on this matter.

Jont apologised on behalf of NRW and re-iterated the reasons given in the NRW written update. He advised that the mapping had been removed when CCW website had been closed. Unfortunately the interactive mapping developed to display OWoL and other mapped information on the NRW website was not considered viable. Given the importance of other work a resolution to the interactive mapping problem had to wait.

An interim solution was currently being worked on and it is hoped it will be available on the website during this year. Jont advised that the Glastir data was also not being displayed.

The Chair noted and shared the concerns of Forum members and will take those to the next meeting of the Board.

Action 54.6: Ruth Hall to take this issue to the next board meeting and raise as an issue on behalf of NAFW. RH

The issue was raised regarding the Coastal Path Officers. Jont advised that he was engaging with the coastal local authorities regarding the appointments and would be starting the recruitment process soon.

7. Any Other Business

Mark Weston informed that the research carried out by the CLA was completed and the CLA (Countryside Alliance) would be providing the information

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting dates and venues were confirmed as:

- 5th July 2016 (Powys Hospitality Centre, Welshpool Livestock Sales, SY21 8SR)
- 8th November 2016 (YHA Cardiff Central, East Tyndall St, Cardiff, CF10 4BB)
- 7th March 2017 (NRW office, Maes y Ffynnon, Bangor)

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

<http://naturalresources.wales>