

Meeting Summary

Title of Meeting:	National Access Forum (NAFW 55)		
Date of Meeting:	5 July 2016 10.30 – 13:00	Venue:	Powys Hospitality Centre, Welshpool Livestock Sales, Buttington Cross, Welshpool, Powys SY21 8SR
Present:	Ruth Hall (NRW, Chair), Carys Drew (NRW), Rhian Jardine (NRW), Rachel Lewis Davies, (NFU Cymru), Howard Davies (NRW), Rowland Pittard (YHA), Steve Rayner (Canoe Wales), Beverley Penney (OSS), David Evans (Elan Valley Trust), Richard Neale (NT), Jean Rosenfeld (CPRW), Bernard Griffiths (FUW), Charles de Winton (CLA Cymru), Mark Stafford-Tolley (WLGA, WROWMWG, IPROW), Andrew Stumpf (Glandŵr Cymru), Emily Finney (WG), Catrin Dellar (WG), John Watkins (WG), Rebecca Brough (Ramblers Cymru), Brett Kibble (Sustrans), Arther Lee (Disabled Ramblers), Duncan Green (LARA), Catherine Williams (WATO), Graham Seymour (NORF NI), Tom Packham (Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water), Heather Clatworthy (BHS), Peter Rutherford (Welsh National Parks), John Morgan (LAF National Representative), Jont Bulbeck (NRW),		
Observers:	Bryan Harrison (Flintshire LAF), Richard Dearing (NRW), Michael Smith (NRW).		
Apologies:	Gwyn Smith* (Sustrans), Mark Weston / Jeanne Hyett* (BHS), Stuart France (CCC), John Cuthbertson* (Disabled Ramblers) Representative (Mountain Training Cymru), Elfyn Jones (BMC), Lyn Cadwallader (One Voice Wales), Ruth Rourke (IPROW*), Rebecca Mattingley (Sport Wales). *denotes alternative representative attended.		

Item No:	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies.	
	Ruth welcomed everyone to the meeting, and reminded attendees they were welcome to speak in Welsh or English whichever their preference.	
	It was noted that this was the first meeting since the National Assembly elections in May, and the appointment of a new Cabinet Secretary for the Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths AM.	

It was also the first meeting since the referendum and the result for UK to leave the EU.

The speakers were welcomed in turn as well as a new Forum member; John Morgan who will be representing Local Access Forums (LAFs) as the newly elected LAF National Representative. Ruth thanked the LAFs' previous National Representative, Jean Rosenfeld for all of this very helpful contributions to the work of NAFW, and the whole Forum noted their appreciation with a round of applause. Jean will continue to represent the interests of CPRW on the Forum.

Most of the actions from the previous meeting were noted as complete, some items were still due to be uploaded to the NAFW webpage and Carys noted that she would follow up on action 54.4, circulating the reports if they were now available.

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

CD

Post meeting note:

The Natura 2000 Thematic Maps are available on the NRW website:

<http://naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/life-n2k-wales/life-n2k-thematic-action-plans/?lang=en>

Trails User Code has been circulated for consultation – deadline 5th August (Carys Drew to issue reminder - 20th July)

Dog Fouling Behaviour Change Pilot study report – now available (not yet on website – attached to email)

2. Sustainable Management of Natural Resources: an overview of legislation and what it means in practice

Emily Finney, Welsh Government (WG), gave an overview and introduction to the thinking behind and the principles of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SMNR), the different stages of the processes and the timetable for the first outputs.

There are three pieces of Welsh primary legislation designed to work together.

- The Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- The Planning (Wales) Act 2015

The Environment Act defines and gives wide scope to the term 'natural resources'. It also sets out the objectives for SMNR (what we want to achieve) and the principles of SMNR (how we want to achieve

this and ways of working); maintaining and enhancing the resilience of ecosystems to cope with pressures e.g. climate change and development so that ecosystems are able to provide the benefits that we need from them. There is synergy between the SMNR objectives and the Wellbeing Goals (set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act).

The Environment Act provides a strong framework for delivery with a statutory timetable;

- The State of the Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) is a requirement for NRW and the first report is due to be published in September 2016. This will form the baseline for NRW work but it will also provide an evidence base for everyone to use. It will include an assessment of the extent to which sustainable development is currently being achieved and signpost where there is a need for policy actions for wellbeing and opportunities to improve.
- National Natural Resources Policy will be produced and owned by Welsh Ministers, this should be produced by March 2017, with evidence drawn from the SoNaRR.
- Area Statements are another requirement for NRW with the purpose of facilitating the national policy at the local community level.

Emily shared some of the internal thoughts and workings carried out by WG during the development of the Environment Bill to give an idea of what points might come through the National Policy and Area Statements and how different issues might be brought together to identify actions that have multiple benefits and look to the long term.

WG would be looking to engage with stakeholders and wider public in the development of National Policy.

Discussion points:

- This work is being delivered across government departments. WG officials involved in access and recreation will be working closely with those on SMNR and the Wellbeing of Future Generations to look for opportunities.
- The State of the Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) is a challenge, but NRW is on target to produce it.
- There is a strong role for the third sector in development, and whilst the public sector were still accountable, they are becoming more enablers for the third sector.
- In terms of the impact of Brexit, the fact that Wales has strong primary legislation is a benefit and access itself is unlikely to be impacted in so far as the legislation is England and Wales legislation.

- Concern that the focus was on extracting from the countryside and natural resources and not investing in it and that the benefit of the European Landscape Convention, a clear document protecting the landscape will be lost as a result of Brexit.
- The Environment Act sets out the principles to ensure that the natural resources are maintained and enhanced, for example, with flooding this would mean looking at the issues on a catchment scale and preventative actions.
- WG work to engage stakeholders in the development of the Natural Resources Policy has just started; it will be a wide exercise for which there are resources. WG welcomed ideas and suggestions for how best to engage with the public and particularly young people.
- The National Natural Resources Policy report will be produced every 5 years in the line with Assembly elections, Ministers are able to amend it in-between these periods if there are significant changes which will need to be taken account of. It has to take account of the SoNNaR and will include:
 - The actions that need to be taken to build resilience in natural resources and
 - Opportunities for natural resources to deliver wellbeing goals e.g. health, low carbon economy.
- Concern that the timing on the face of the legislation, to produce the National Resources Policy by March 2017 was insufficient to enable adequate engagement in the process.
- Trade-offs and balancing between different natural resources are an issue which is being worked on under Wellbeing of Future Generations. WG will look for solutions that work in the long-term and deliver multiple benefits. The principles of sustainable management will provide the objective means by which actions will be considered. The legislation provides a framework and brings the need to look at the differences to the surface in order to realise all the policies in land use and bring integration.

Ruth Hall noted that the timing of the next meeting would provide a good opportunity to have further discussion and contribute to the planned engagement; and offered NAFW's help should WG welcome specific input.

Action 55.1 : Ruth Hall: Consider inclusion of SMNR item on the next agenda.

RH

Action 55.2: Carys Drew: circulate timeline of legislation and actions and the WG webpage.

CD

Post meeting completion of **Action 55.2:**

[Link to the diagram outlining legislation for sustainable development to secure the long term well-being of Wales.](#)

<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160610-three-bills-diagram-en.pdf>

Links to legislation outputs timetable – Environment Act 2016, Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and Planning Act 2015.
<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160321-environment-wales-act-links-to-legislation-en.pdf>

Information about the Environment Act
<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/natural-resources-management/environment-act/?lang=en>

Information about the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:
<http://thewaleswewant.co.uk/about/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015>

and
<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>

Information about the Planning Act:
<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/legislation/planning-wales-act-2015/?lang=en>

3. NFU Cymru – a landowner’s perspective on recreation and access

Rachel Lewis-Davies talked about the background of the NFU, a member’s organisation, and their approach to recreation and access. Education about food and farming was a big part and a rewarding part of the organisations’ role and access is seen as a means of increasing understanding about the countryside and farming.

The NFU advocates the principles of working together and is an evidenced-based organisation. The new Welsh legislation was already influencing how NFU Cymru works, looking at what they do that contributes to the goals and how they can contribute more.

From a farmers’ perspective there are two key important points:

- Safe access
- Responsible access

Rachel gave examples of some of the issues that cause real problems for farmers, such as mixing of livestock having an impact on work, and managing biosecurity.

Rachel raised a number of questions for consideration, including:

- How do we maintain infrastructure and promote update and responsible access in the context of diminishing resources?
 - How can we ensure that access provision is valued and develop business opportunities for farmers?
-

- the question of how LAFs would interact with Public Service Boards in future.

There needed to be a focus on the outcome of increasing activity rather than the output of increasing available access.

Discussion points:

- Suggestion that LAFs would need a change in their terms of reference to enhance their role and to enable them to engage with the PSBs and that LAF areas may differ to those included in Area Statements.
- Digital maps in the public domain are not working to the same standard of digital information, information should not be available on the basis of authority boundaries - there should be an all Wales digital map of rights of way.
- That it would be advantageous to have a mechanism that enabled farmers to get benefit from access provision e.g. campsites, facilities for access users, however, in practice they are frequently not being enabled by authority planners to do so – this was acknowledged as a big hurdle to enabling farmers to diversify.
- Rachel invited the other farming unions represented on the NAFW to add other points from farmers and landowning perspective.
- FUW and CLA shared similar view points and both noted that their responses to the WG Green Paper consultation were in the public domain should anyone want to see further details.
- A central question is 'what does sustainable agriculture in Wales look like' and this discussion presented an exciting opportunity and is likely to come to the fore, in light of Brexit.
- There is some fragility to the principle that access should be free at point of entry, and it should be borne in mind that the people who would most benefit from using public access are the most easily put off.
- NFU have a role in encouraging people to visit and understand the countryside, and wants to focus on what people have in common and see more use of access not more access. People using and benefitting from access should be the outcome.

4. Wales Coast Path Visitor Survey and Economic Impact

Quentin Grimley, gave a presentation about the report on the Wales Coast Path (WCP), which had been produced on behalf of NRW by Beaufort Research. The final report is going through the NRW scrutiny process within NRW and would be made available once this process had been completed.

Quentin shared some of the figures and comparisons with previous survey which looked at various visitor attributes including where people were from, gender and social class, whether or not they were staying overnight, how much they spent during their stay and

awareness of the Wales Coast Path. The report also looks at the way in which the WCP was used, for short or long journeys, circular or 'there and back' walks. In considering the report it is important to be clear of the difference between coastal walkers and people walking specifically on the route of the Wales Coast Path.

Once approved, the report findings will be used to inform the management and marketing of the Wales Coast Path, as well as providing insights for the management of other pathways and network programmes. It is important that full use be made of the report findings - which help demonstrate the value of access to the Welsh economy.

Discussion points:

- There was no specific question to interviewees about the reason for their visit, it would be helpful to know the number of visitors that were additional visitors - visiting specifically because of the WCP.
- It was suggested that a good way to increase the value of the WCP would be to make it accessible to different types of users. Since only about 2% of the Wales Coast Path is open to equestrian use there was opportunity to consider making sections of the route multi-user, perhaps starting with trial sections?
- It is very helpful to have evidence to demonstrate the value of access.
- NRW are following work by Natural England looking at measuring genuine new usage on the England Coast Path.

Action 55.3: Carys Drew to circulate WCP report when available CD

5. Recreation in Northern Ireland

Graham Seymour, Chair of National Outdoor Recreation Forum in Northern Ireland has been in post since the start of the year, and attended NAFW to see how it is set up and how it operates. Graham shared information about the way that recreation is managed in Northern Ireland, with Sport NI, who published the NI Outdoor Recreation Action Plan published in 2014, this Plan is signed off by three government departments which shows the commitment to integration and collective delivery. Grahams' role as Chair was to hold Sport NI to account and to ensure that they deliver on their commitments. They were currently awaiting the establishment of a strategic Government Group.

Access provision is different in NI, where there isn't an extensive path network or equivalent of CROW Act Access land, nor the Scottish access land: rather, public access is reliant on permissive, de facto access and access on public land. Legislation relating to access is outdated.

Outdoor Recreation NI are working to deliver very high quality products, and there is a lot of demand for community trails, the desire for these coming from the ground. There are already well established strategic routes, the community trails are of short to medium distance and are easily accessible. There is a lot of community pride in these routes which have been created from scratch.

There are access programmes for health, and there is a desire to have sensible and meaningful discussion with farming interests.

Discussion points:

- New access is not paid for, but sometimes the cost of landowner liability insurance is covered.
- The different set up in NI was noted and also that the current NAFW Terms of Reference go back to 2001. Ruth Hall invited members to make suggestions for improving ways of working or any gaps in representation; representation from Public Health Wales was considered as a current gap.
- Difficulties with new development and access maintenance were noted and the suggestion that certain parts of NRW fail to see the value of the rights of way network, and raise a lot of barriers to developing access. There is a need for NRW to have internal training to help staff understand the new legislative drive and that they should be helping authorities maximise the benefits.
- The NAFW Subgroups - small study teams set up in NAFW to consider specific items e.g. consultations had been most useful. Future groups could be set up proactively e.g. to consider access as a health prescription.
- Suggestion that the name 'National Access Forum for Wales' should be changed as it causes confusion with Local Access Forums Chairs meeting.
- The Forum should collectively look at the evidence required to talk to Welsh Government (HD point?)
- There was support for the continuation of the written contributions – useful to share in advance and helps to keep the meeting concise.

Action 55.4: Members to consider the NAFW terms of reference and make any suggestions for different ways of working and gaps in membership.

All

Action 55.5 Carys Drew contact Public Health Wales to discuss possible membership.

CD

Action 55.6: Ruth Hall/Howard Davies to take back the point on NRW's approach to supporting authorities develop access.

RH/HD

CD

Action 55.7 : Carys Drew to include NAFW terms of reference as item on next agenda to enable discussion.

6. Contributions from all

Rhian Jardine wanted to raise the profile with the Forum of the work which NRW is currently carrying out. Having been established for 3 years, NRW had instigated reviews of all work areas, with eight Business Area Reviews being undertaken in total. Rhian is the project manager for the Recreation and Education review; this includes NRW's work in recreation and access, education, external funding and grants, 'Mynediad' scheme for permitting activities (previously Woodlands and You) and 'Cyfle' (NRW's working with Volunteers and apprentices). The review is looking at where to take opportunities and where to scale back, and at how NRW can be more effective in the delivery of for example, visitor centres profit, major programmes such as Wales Coast Path and Rights of Way Improvement Plan Funding Programme and Open Access.

NRW's Outdoor Recreation and Access Enabling Plan will need to be refreshed in light of the new legislative duties and in light of the Business Area Review; the aim will continue to be 'more people participating in and benefitting from outdoor recreation more often'.

NRW has started work to review the Corporate Plan and will be seeking input from stakeholders over the coming months.

The Chair asked Howard Davies, in his role as Chief Executive of the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to present an item at the next meeting.

Action 55.8: Howard Davies to present on protected landscapes at the next meeting. HD

Canoe Wales- Steve Rayner highlighted points from his written contribution. Canoe Wales is the national governing body for paddle sports for which access to water is the number one issue. Steve noted that in recent years, Canoe Wales had not engaged with the access community: the reason for this was based on a belief that paddlers had the right to be on the water at anytime. Whilst Canoe Wales' underlying view of the law has not changed, he acknowledged that this had not been a helpful approach. Canoe Wales is now under new management and want to work with others to achieve sustainable, shared use of Wales' waterways.

Access to rivers is the subject of very entrenched views between angling and canoeing interests. Access to gain access to water (i.e. across land) was an area where they were clear that access rights do not necessarily exist and this was an area where some discussion and progress could be made. Canoe Wales is now willing to consider appropriate management arrangements, and support of the national

governing body is important for such arrangements to work. Steve had been in post since February, working 1 day a week and had so far been engaging in areas of existing access, none of the existing access currently meets Canoe Wales standards but they are working on finding the middle ground and building good relationships.

7. AOB

8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting dates and venues were confirmed as:

- 8th November 2016 (YHA Cardiff Central)
- 7 March 2017 – NRW Offices, Maes y Ffynnon, Bangor, LL57 2DW

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

<http://naturalresources.wales>
