

**Confirmed Minutes of the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum Meeting held at 2pm on Wednesday July 16th 2014 at Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Visitor Centre (Mountain Centre), Libanus.**

**Present**

Chairman – Mike Scott Archer (MSA)

Secretary – Richard Ball (RB)

Hilda Williams (HW)

Colin Woodley (CW)

Jon Everington (JE)

Patrick Dobbs (PD)

Dave Sharman (DS)

Pavel Vitek (PV)

Janet Bailey (JB)

**Observers**

Eifion Jones (EJ)

Rights of Way Officer BBNPA

Michael Smith (MS)

Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

Mark Stafford-Tolley (MST)

Powys LAF

Andrew Fleming (AF)

Blaenau Gwent CBC

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

MSA welcomed members and observers to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Denis Murphy, Phillipa Cherryson, Ian Mabblerley, Julian Atkins, Richard Davies (Chair Monmouthshire LAF), Matthew Lewis (Secretary Monmouthshire LAF), Hazel Bowen (Canal & Rivers Trust) and Eric Davies (Carmarthenshire LAF).

**2. Confirmation of Minutes of the Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

The minutes were accepted and it was agreed MSA should sign them as a true record.

**3. Matters Arising Not Otherwise Appearing on Agenda**

The Visitor Management Plan consultation response from the LAF has been sent to the BBNPA and was tabled at the meeting. The response was a compilation of points received from members by the Chairman. MSA asked if there were any additional comments that members would like to be submitted.

Members agreed that the LAF should make an additional comment stating that there should be more emphasis on the car parking and transport issues within the plan.

Members agreed that the initial response was robust and thanked MSA.

#### **4. Proposed Cycle Way feasibility**

MSA welcomed and introduced Anthea Jones (Powys County Council) and Helen Davies (Sustrans). AJ gave a brief overview of the project which intends to create a shared use route from Swansea to Brecon. Members were provided with plans showing the proposed route along with an engineering study that had been carried out.

The First phase is between Coelbren and Crai and eleven landowners along this section have been consulted and have given positive responses. Some of the concerns and issues raised include privacy, security, livestock and trespass. HD stressed that good signage with public rights of way links along with maintenance of the surface and furniture will help address some of the issues raised.

HD stated that Sustrans would be looking to have a tarmac surface for the length of the route with the option to soften the edges with dust/grit surface to limit the aesthetic impact in the countryside. Members discussed the merits of having a tarmac surface to reduce maintenance costs over its lifetime, however concerns were raised about erosion from surface run off and the breaking up of the tarmac in freezing conditions may lead to higher maintenance costs.

MSA asked if the route would be permissive. AJ confirmed that it was difficult to get landowners to agree to anything other than a permissive route. EJ felt that it needed to be more permanent than a permissive route and MST suggested that it could be compulsory made as a bridleway. HD confirmed that Sustrans only work on 40 year agreements.

JB advised that the Archaeological Trusts be consulted as the route would be using the old railway line which is part of the historic environment.

HD asked members to consider possible links to communities along the trail as they are looking for ideas.

**Members unanimously supported the proposal and it was agreed that the LAF would write a letter of support.**

MSA thanked Anthea Jones and Helen Davies.

#### **5. Canal towpath code of conduct**

MSA updated members following the Canal and River Trust (CRT) conference and work shop sessions he attended on April 30<sup>th</sup>. The CRT is developing a towpath code for their network and feedback has been received from across the country through the workshop sessions.

MSA asked members if they had any additional comments. Anthea Jones offered to make a note of any comments and feed these back to Hazel Bowen at CRT.

JB thought that the landowners alongside the towpath should have been consulted as stakeholders as they can be adversely affected by towpath users.

HW said she would like hearing impairment to be considered as well as visual and mobility impairment.

RB thought that there was a limit to what a code of conduct could achieve and should be backed up with rangers on the ground. JE agreed and said that the agreed code could be used more as an enforcement tool. JB agreed but didn't want policing to be left to groups of volunteers.

MSA thanked Anthea Jones for agreeing to feedback to Hazel Bowen at CRT.

## **6. Tawe River Access**

RB provided an update following concerns raised by Tawe Anglers Association of kayakers launching from Craig Y Nos Country Park. Following a recent meeting, the BBNPA and the Tawe Anglers Association are looking at setting up an agreement. **JE said he would investigate who would be interested in representing the paddle sport participants.**

## **7. Glastir Permissive Access**

A reply to the letter sent to the Welsh government regarding Glastir Permissive Access has been received. EJ confirmed that all the previous Tir Gofal permissive paths agreed by the LAF, paths proposed by the Brecon Beacons National Park Society and Paths put forward by a landowner in Llangorse have all been submitted to the Welsh Government.

MSA thanked Members, EJ and LL for all the work carried out surveying the permissive paths.

## **8. Annual Report**

The draft report was circulated amongst members. Any comments from members should be emailed to RB.

PD commented on the statement 'heavily used paths deteriorate' and pointed out that under used paths can equally deteriorate.

Subject to any minor changes JE proposed to accept the Draft Annual Report and this was seconded by CW.

#### **9. Welsh Government Nature Fund**

RB provided an introduction to the Welsh Government Nature Fund. The £6m fund is focussed on seven geographical areas in Wales with the Brecon Beacons being one area. RB said that the BBNPA is looking to submit a bid, with Waun Fach and Hatterrall Ridge in the Black Mountains being the areas it is proposed to concentrate on. Work would involve peat conservation and bog conservation as this has been identified by NRW as under threat and there are also associated concerns regarding water quality in the catchment area. Proposed works include path works to help the recovery of the peat areas along with developing a Black Mountains Land Management Group.

JE agreed that there were severe erosion issues across the approaches to Waun Fach and across the plateau. He recommended replacing the existing Trig point remains with a stone cairn immediately adjacent to the path.

Members unanimously supported the proposal and the Chairman agreed to write a letter of support.

#### **10. Welsh Government Access Review**

EJ confirmed that the Green Paper is due between November and the end of the financial year.

#### **11. Rights of Way Report**

EJ confirmed that £50,000 of ROWIP funding has been received and that the Welsh Government has confirmed that the ROWIP legislation will not be repealed in Wales.

Members recently received a consultation for the diversion of a Bridleway Nr Nantygollen, Felindre. The LAF agreed to approve the recommendation.

#### **12. Any Other Competent Business**

PD suggested that a future item for the agenda should look at safety in the hills.

JE asked EJ for an update on the diversion application at Newcourt Farm, Felindre. EJ confirmed that the representative for the Open Spaces Society will not change his opinion and therefore the application will go before the Planning and Rights of Way Committee.

MSA suggested that members with any thoughts on alternative venues or a change to the time of meetings should feedback to RB or LL to give a guide to the future Chair.

MSA and RB thanked all members for their work over the past three years and encouraged them to apply for membership of the new Forum.

HW thanked MSA for chairing the meetings and for encouraging participation of all members

RB confirmed that he would write to all existing members and send application forms at the start of the recruitment process which was likely to be in September.

### **13. Date of Next Meeting**

To be confirmed