

Confirmed Minutes of the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum Meeting held at 14.00 on Wednesday 22nd January 2014 at The National Park Visitor Centre

Present

Chairman: - Mike Scott Archer (MSA)

Secretary: - Richard Ball (RB)

Pam Bell (PM)

Ian Mabberley (IM)

Denis Murphy (DM)

Gwyn Gwillim (GG)

Colin Woodley (CW)

Julian Atkins (JA)

Phillipa Cherryson (PC)

Patrick Dobbs (PD)

Jon Everington (JE)

Dave Sharman (DS)

Observers:

Eifion Jones (EJ)

Right of Way Officer BBNPA

Michael Smith (MS)

Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

Paul Sinnadurai

Conservation Manager BBNPA

Andy Fleming

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

John Evans

Tim Rich

1. Welcomes and Apologies

MSA welcomed members and observers. Jon Everington who has recently been appointed a member of the LAF was welcomed.

Apologies for absence were received from Pavel Vitek, David Sharman (for late attendance), Hilda Williams, Mark Stafford-Tolley (Powys CC) and Richard Davies (Chairman Monmouthshire LAF).

2. Confirmation of Minutes from the Meeting on 9th October 2013

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

3. Matters Arising Not Otherwise Appearing On the Agenda

Draft Events Management Policy

JA confirmed that the report would be taken to the next Corporate Management Team meeting. The policy had been revised following representations from the LAF and a recent meeting with IM.

4. Presentation – “Some endemic plants of the Brecon Beacons”

Dr Tim Rich

DM welcomed and introduced the guest speaker Dr Tim Rich (TR) who delivered a presentation on the endemic plants of the Brecon Beacons which was well received.

He highlighted a number of threats that the species face, including high levels of sheep grazing, increased public access and hydro schemes.

The presentation was followed by an opportunity to put questions to TR. JE asked if outdoor activity providers had been advised of the locations of the species at risk. JE suggested that TR speak to the two regional outdoor activities groups covering the BBNP regarding access and use of areas where it has been identified that the plants are at risk.

IM highlighted the difficulty faced with balancing the need to provide green energy such as hydro schemes and protecting biodiversity.

PD asked if there were new species being found in the National Park. TR said that it is possible to find new species with some being successful and spreading.

MSA thanked TR for his very interesting presentation.

5. Glastir Permissive Access

An action from the previous meeting was to arrange a workshop to discuss and look at the existing Tir Gofal permissive paths. Since the last meeting MSA had decided, rather than holding a workshop, it would be best to visit and survey each path.

Prior to the meeting a map was sent to each member, indicating the general location of each path. Members were asked to volunteer and indicate which path/s they would be willing to survey. Large scale maps would then be forwarded for each path.

MSA suggested that members meet in Crai to survey the paths concentrated in this area. IM commented that Crai was quite a distance for many of the members to travel and would prefer to survey paths local to where he lives.

It was agreed that members volunteering to survey paths would contact EJ.

JA reminded members that the deadline for submitting the information to the Welsh Government was May 2014. MSA suggested that the surveys should be completed by the end of March.

DM asked what members would be looking for when surveying the paths. MSA talked through the survey form that would need to be completed with each path survey.

RB recommended that the LAF feedback to the Welsh Government on the difficulty of this approach, where the LAF is being asked to identify a wish list of routes without having any indication of which farms are entering Glastir. MSA agreed to draft a letter to send to Welsh Government.

6. Brecon Beacons National Park Visitor Management Plan

JA informed members that a draft Plan has been received from the consultants and the National Park Authority has agreed for the document to go out to public consultation. Workshops have been held internally within the Authority to look at how to take this forward. It will be linked to landscape character areas. Richard Tyler will announce the consultation dates soon and JA stated that there would be a 12 week consultation period.

7. Wales Government Access Review

An update was given by EJ. The latest from the Welsh Government is that the Green Paper is imminent. It is likely to contain a list of options and that the Minister will consider them and consultation responses that are received. It is understood there will be a three month consultation period.

EJ updated the members on the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. There is a consultation currently running on how the Active Travel Act will apply in Wales. It is proposed that the Act will apply to built up areas with a population greater than 2000. In the Brecon Beacons National Park it is proposed that the Act will apply to Brecon, Crickhowell and Gilwern.

8. Black Mountains Volunteers

RB gave an update on the work of the volunteer group. Last year the group completed the equivalent of 150 days' work. There are currently 24 members and it is hoped to increase this number. The Authority is submitting an application for a Sustainable Development Fund grant to fund training, equipment and help expand the group. Back in the autumn the group visited the Lake District National Park to look at a similar scheme that has been running for a number of years and in the New Year the group held a work party on Offa's Dyke Path. 12 volunteers turned up along with one of the Authority Members.

IM asked what the difference was between the volunteers that work alongside the Wardens. RB said that the Black Mountain volunteers are a team established and specifically trained to carry out upland path work rather than lowland general works carried out by the warden service.

IM asked if it was possible for the LAF to receive a report at the next agenda on the work carried out by warden led volunteers.

MSA gave credit to members of the group especially as a number of them travel quite a distance to volunteer. He also wanted to convey back to Jason Rees thanks for the work put into setting up the group.

9. Open Access Review

MS gave an update. The review is at the appeal stage and 4 of the 40 appeals that have been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate are with the Brecon Beacons National Park. The details can be found on the Planning Inspectorate website. The LAF is a statutory consultee and any comments are to be sent to the Planning Inspectorate, the deadline for comments is 19th February 2014.

10. Rights of Way Report

EJ confirmed that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan funding would carry on in the next financial year. RB had received a further £2500 following an underspend in the Research and Evaluation of ROWIP that was carried out by Natural Resources Wales.

Members have been consulted on the proposed diversion of a public footpath at Newcourt Farm, Felindre. Following a site meeting between MSA, JE and the landowner a route had been proposed which has now been objected to by the Open Spaces Society, EJ said he would be renegotiating with the land owner.

11. Any Other Competent Business

Managing Public Access Seminar

MSA gave members a brief summary. The joint meeting was held by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Farmers Union Wales, NFU Cymru and the CLA to raise awareness of the current liability that landowners have with regards to the public accessing public rights of way, managing those risks and the duty of care required by landowners to people accessing their land. There was also the opportunity to hear from John Watkins, Welsh Government, about the current review of access legislation.

JA said that approximately 80 landowners attended the event and that on the whole the feedback was positive with many indicating that they would be very interested in attending future seminars.

MSA thought that following the presentation from the Welsh Government, the general feeling from the audience was that landowners did not want more access.

PD highlighted the increased liability landowners would have by inviting more access on their land. RB thought that the liability aspect would be dealt with in the Green Paper. GG was concerned that it would result in an increase in Insurance payments which are already high.

JA agreed to circulate the seminar presentation's to the LAF Members.

Press Releases

MSA said that a press release written by PC had been published in the Abergavenny Chronicle. Unfortunately the last quarter of the report, which had highlighted the problems of path erosion, had been cut. The report had not been picked up by the Brecon and Radnor Express, possibly due to the report being more relevant to the East of the National Park.

MSA asked if members had any thoughts on the subject of the next press release.

Following discussion members decided on a press release covering Glastir Permissive Access. JA thought it would be a proactive approach for the LAF to issue a press release

asking landowners that are thinking of going down the Glastir public access route to contact the LAF. It was agreed that PC liaise with GG, CW and PD

PD suggested issuing a press release incorporating the earlier presentation on the 'endemic species in the Brecon Beacons' and activity providers. PC will liaise with DM and JE.

A465 Dualling

JA gave members an update on the A465 dualling. The enquiry is to be held on 18th March 2014 at The Old School, Gilwern. There are representations from horse riding community. The Public Enquiry documents are available for viewing on the website.

MSA suggested that a presentation on the A465 Dualling project is added to the next meeting's agenda.

Williams Commission Report

RB summarised the findings of the report in relation to the BBNPA.

Beacons Bus

JA updated the members on the current situation. The provision of the Beacons Bus may have to cease due to the budget cuts faced by the Authority. A third of the funding comes from the BBNPA, a third from fares and a third from partner contributions. There is currently an uncertainty on the amount of funding from partner contributions. BBNPA is currently carrying out a public consultation which will inform the decision members make.

DM asked if it was possible to self-finance through increasing fares. JA confirmed that there are restrictions on the amount that can be charged for fares.

12. Dates for Future Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 16th April, 2.00pm at the BBNPA Visitor Centre, Libanus.

ENCLOSURE 5

Item I

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