

Introduction to Black Mountains Volunteer Scheme

The Brecon Beacons National Park Upland Path Strategy, produced in 2006, identified large scale erosion issues on many upland paths in the Park and that a large capital expenditure would be required to tackle the issue. As well as large scale works there is also a need to maintain paths that have been repaired or that are at risk of deteriorating. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) has adopted the following guiding principles in terms of upland path management.

- Repairs are necessary to prevent or ameliorate visual intrusion and environmental damage.
- Works should be of a high standard of design and implementation using indigenous materials, sympathetic in colour and texture to the immediate surrounding area. Uniformity of construction should be avoided e.g. steps
- Techniques used should protect existing vegetation and, normally, only locally occurring plant species should be used in restoration. Non local species will be accepted only where necessary as a nurse crop and where natural succession will rapidly result in their disappearance.
- The more remote the path, the more stringently the criteria for path repairs should be applied. This will be a matter of judgment but in general, the more remote or wild the location the less acceptable an obviously engineered path will be.
- Repaired paths should be suitable to the route's use and constructed on a scale appropriate for the intended use as a footpath, bridleway or byway.
- Before any repair work is agreed the question should be asked 'is there a better solution?'
- The use of way marks, cairns or other intrusive features, other than those traditionally established on summits and path junctions will be discouraged.
- A sustained commitment of resources to path management will be sought, so that small-scale continuous maintenance can replace infrequent major repairs as the normal method of path management.

BBNPA wish to recruit volunteers to undertake routine maintenance on upland paths that have previously been constructed or repaired in the Black Mountains, to protect the capital investment already made. Additionally the volunteers will be asked to report erosion (and other) problems which they observe using a simple reporting mechanism. The volunteers will also be encouraged to become involved in 1 or 2 larger projects per year as a group.

It is anticipated that volunteers will be given access to a dedicated part of the BBNPA web site where they will log reports such as survey sheets work logs, proposed work activities etc. Volunteers will be able to use this facility to plan their work days and invite other volunteers to join them.

The scheme is designed to become largely self sustaining in terms of management following initial inception and will be funded by the Walking with Offa project during its

initial stages. BBNPA will be responsible for co – ordination and management but on a day to day basis we will encourage volunteers to be self reliant. BBNPA will have ongoing costs in terms of supply of (hand) tools, training, supply of materials.

How it will work.

We wish to recruit a pool of volunteers who will receive training (dependent on need) in:

- Mountain awareness
- Environmental awareness
- Path surveying techniques
- Path repair techniques
- Manual handling
- Health and safety and risk assessment
- First Aid

The BBNPA will produce maps showing paths which we wish volunteers to maintain. Following training volunteers will be asked to undertake c.10 days maintenance/ surveying per 12 month period.

Volunteers will be asked to identify which routes they will / have maintained via a web page to allow BBNPA to observe maintenance activity.

A number of tool stores will be established to which volunteers will have access.

We will develop a 'buddy' system to ensure that somebody is aware of when and where volunteers are and to report non return.

Volunteers registered on the scheme will be covered by BBNPA insurance.

BBNPA will be required to ensure that statutory consents are obtained and conditions are met.