

# Local Access Forum

# Annual Report

2018-2019



# **Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum**

## **Annual Report, April 2018 – March 2019**

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## **BBNP LAF ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19**

### **Chairman's Foreword**

I feel privileged to be continuing to Chair the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum. The current members ensure that every meeting is, at the same time, insightful, challenging and enjoyable. The skills and understanding around the table ensure that no stone is left unturned in the quest for the best possible outcome for access users and landowners alike. Although it is the rule that no Member represents any outside organisation (e.g. Ramblers Association, Farming Unions etc.) the make up of this LAF makes sure that a really wide range of interests is adequately covered. My only regret is that, despite considerable effort, we do not have any off-road cyclists to put forward their increasingly important views.

Listening to the woes of some other LAF Chairs from around Wales, in terms of their relationships with their respective Authorities, I am also very pleased to record the closeness of the relationship between the LAF and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Officers.

Ian Maberley

Chairman, Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum

### **Chairman's Report**

As is detailed later in this Annual Report, 2018-19 has been a busy year for the LAF. Matters have ranged from the production of the latest ROWIP, covering all aspects of access in the Park, to considerations about disabled access across about 15 yards of a track in the far West. In other words, no issue is either too big or too small for the LAF to consider. This is important as often the smaller issues are the ones which help to inform and direct the wider ones.

One example of this came out of a matter raised by one Member about a Glastir tree planting scheme in the East of the Park. It became obvious that Local Access Forum had not been included in the list of statutory consultees for the Scheme. By good fortune, at the next all-Wales Chairs meeting a presentation of the Scheme was on the Agenda. I was able to highlight this anomaly and now LAFs in Wales are being consulted where any aspect of public access is potentially threatened by a Glastir tree-planting scheme.

I have to say here, that without the expert guidance of all of the Access and Rights of Way Team, we would often struggle to deliver a legally correct response. On behalf of all of the Members I would like to thank Paul, Eifion, Richard and Lisa for their hard work and forbearance.

Arriving at an answer that satisfies users and landowners is often difficult as their needs and aspirations are so often widely differing. However, I believe that with the breadth of backgrounds of the members, we usually end up with something which is acceptable to all parties.

Finally I am encouraged that some BBNPA Members also attend our meetings as Observers. I am sure that this helps mutual understanding and I look forward to welcoming many more in the future.

## **A note from the Secretary**

The current members of the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum (BBNP LAF) were appointed in November 2017 and are therefore about half way through their term of office. The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority decided to appoint the maximum number of members allowed (22) to the LAF and meetings are always vibrant and interesting and have started to attract more observers than has been the case in the past.

During the past year the BBNP LAF has discussed a variety of access related issues and, whilst the debate has not always provided formal advice to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, advice has been given to its Officers in a less formal way and this has been very useful.

The LAF has also influenced other access providers in the Park such as Natural Resources Wales, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and Welsh Government.

Over the past year the LAF membership has become more proactive in agenda setting which is welcomed and have supported BBNPA officers in a number of ways. The LAF has supported BBNPA funding applications for access related projects such as the Step Changes project and have advised on and supported delivery of other projects. The LAF has also supported the BBNPA in trying to improve access at specific locations, for example at Llyn y Fan Fach where it appears that progress is now being made.

The LAF has provided constructive advice and support throughout the year and has responded to the ups and downs. I would like to thank all members for their contributions and significant amount of time that they spend on LAF issues during meetings and outside the meeting cycle.

Richard Ball

Secretary, Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum.

## **Introduction**

This current Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum was established on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and comprises 22 members, including a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman. The National Park Authority has a statutory duty to establish at least one Local Access Forum (LAF) as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.

The Forum has only one statutory function, which is to advise the National Park Authority (NPA), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and others as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. This advice should be given having taken due regard to the needs of land-management and the natural beauty of the area.

Meeting papers relating to the LAF can be found on the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) website, [www.beacons-npa.gov.uk](http://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk), or members of the public can view copies at the National Park Office, Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, LD3 7HP or individual copies can be ordered from that office (at a small charge). Members of the public are welcomed at all meetings of the Forum and may be invited to speak at the discretion of the Chairman. Forum Members can be contacted via the Secretary.

## **The Year Reviewed**

A Flavour of Issues Discussed and Advice Given by the Local Access Forum 2018 – 2019

Not all issues discussed by the LAF are listed below but the following gives a flavour of the LAF business during the past year. Many items such as the Review of the BBNPA Rights of Way Improvement Plan were discussed at a number of different meetings as they were significant areas of work. During the year the LAF held 1 site meeting and 3 formal meetings.

### **Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)**

The ROWIP is a strategic plan for access management and the BBNPA produced a ROWIP in 2007 and there was a requirement to review ROWIPs 10 years after they had been published. Welsh Government has produced statutory guidance regarding the review of ROWIPs in Wales and the BBNPA is following this guidance.

The guidance requires that linkages are made to other strategies, plans and Welsh Government policy and legislation such as the Well Being of Future Generations Act. It also requires that assessments are made of public need as well as identifying opportunities.

The LAF has been fully consulted during this process and has commented in detail on the draft ROWIP. The BBNPA has incorporated comments and suggestions made by the LAF.

## Access at Llyn y Fan Fach

The BBNPA had been working with Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water for some time to improve access at Llyn y Fan Fach. Part of the access road had already been upgraded. Further improvements were required to increase informal parking (non-surfaced) and to remove gates on the track from the car park to the lake which would make the route more accessible for use by powered wheelchairs. Site visits were undertaken by the Chairman, Josie Pearson, the Secretary and Wardens manager who explained the issues to the LAF members. The LAF has supported the BBNPA proposals to improve access at this location and negotiations are ongoing between the parties involved.



## **CROW Act Access Restrictions**

Over the past few years there have been very few CROW access land restrictions within the BBNP. However it was drawn to the attention of the LAF that on occasion access was being restricted on NRW estate without a formal CROW restriction. Although there is provision in statutory guidance to manage access on CROW access land in an informal manner this does not include entirely restricting the public for more than a few minutes. Following representations made by the BBNPLAF and the BBNPA NRW has reviewed its guidance to managers to ensure that access restrictions are correctly managed on its estate.

## **The Original Mountain Marathon**

The Original Mountain Marathon was held in the Black Mountains in the autumn of 2018. The LAF was consulted on proposed arrangements and the event which brought 3000 participants to the area concluded with relatively few problems.

## **The Monmouthshire Way**

The proposal to create The Monmouthshire Way, a 116 mile circular route part of which pass through Brecon Beacons National Park was presented to the BBNP LAF by David Morgan. The BBNP LAF made a number of observations, comments and provided useful advice to its promoters.

## **Funding Applications**

The LAF lent its support to the Healthy, Active and Outdoors project (joint BBNPA / Powys County Council project) bid to NRW and to BBNPA's Step Changes ENRAW (Enabling Natural Resources and Well-Being) application. Both of these projects seek to provide conditions that encourage greater participation in outdoor activity by a greater range of people. Many of these people may currently be excluded from outdoors activity by physical or perceptual barriers. The aim of the projects are to improve health and well-being as well as understanding and enjoyment of the countryside.

## **Bryn Arw Site Visit**

Bryn Arw is a hill approximately 4 Km north of Abergavenny. It rises to just over 380 m, is common land and therefore CROW access land and can be accessed by a number of public rights of way. The hill is largely bracken infested but is nevertheless moderately popular with walkers. A local grazier has submitted an application for a Glastir woodland creation scheme which would involve planting broad leaved trees on the eastern slopes of the hill and installing some fencing to exclude stock from the new planting. The grazier invited the LAF to visit the site and provide comments. The LAF supported the scheme conditional on appropriate access being provided through any fencing for legitimate visitors and that its support was for this particular scheme and should not be construed as a general support for planting of trees on common land.



*LAF Members on site visit to Bryn Arw*

## **APPENDIX I**

### **APPOINTING AUTHORITY DETAILS**

#### **Appointing Authority:**

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Plas y Ffynnon

Cambrian Way

Brecon

Powys

LD3 7HP

Tel. 01874 624437

Fax. 01874 622574

Email. [enquiries@beacons-npa.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@beacons-npa.gov.uk)

#### **Secretary:**

Richard Ball

Countryside and Access Projects Officer

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Plas y Ffynnon

Cambrian Way

Brecon

Powys

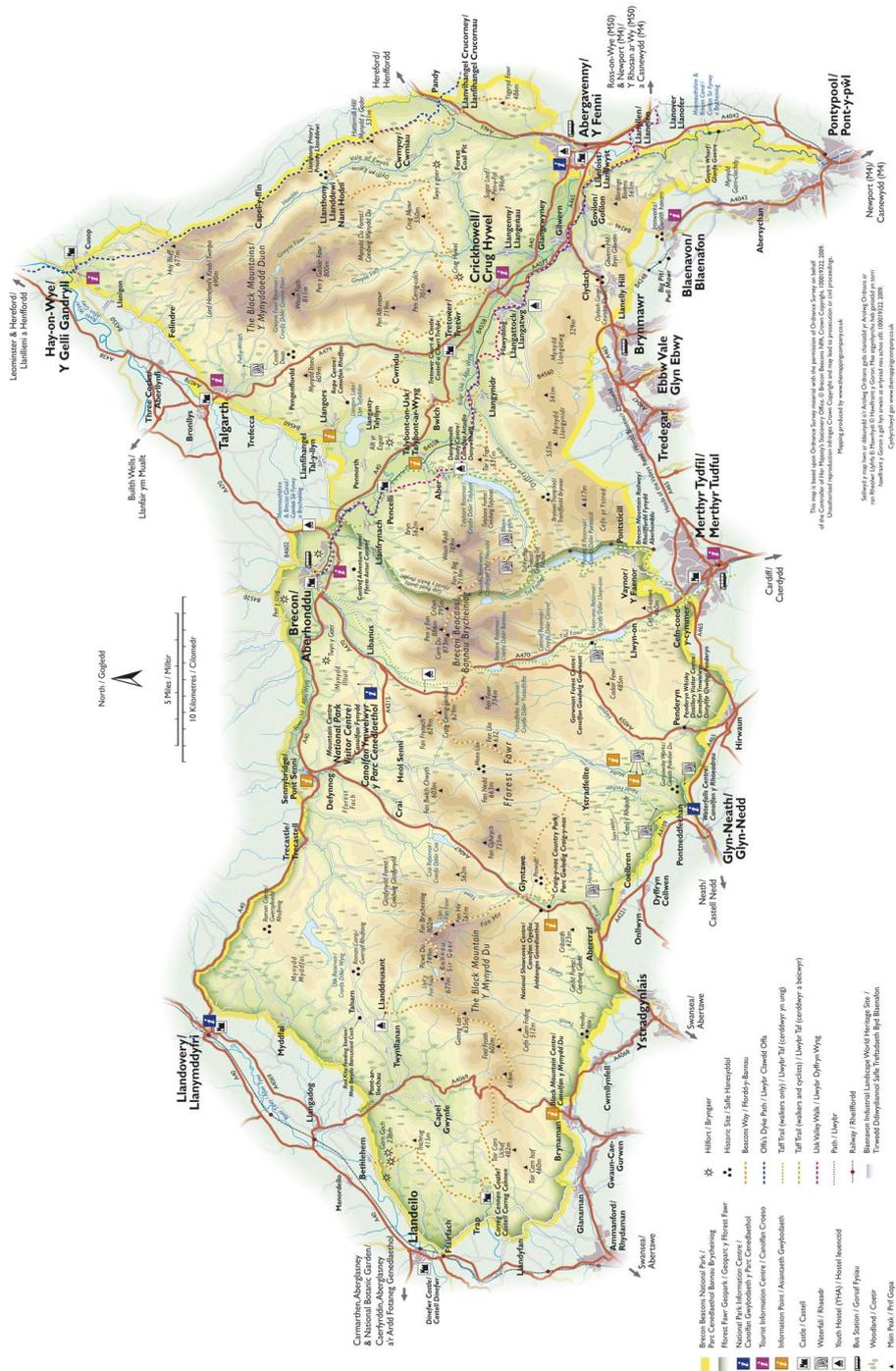
LD3 7HP.

Tel. 01874 620464

Email. [richard.ball@beacons-npa.gov.uk](mailto:richard.ball@beacons-npa.gov.uk)

# Appendix II

## Map



## **APPENDIX III**

### **MEETING DETAILS**

During the year the following meetings were held, all of which were open to, and attended by the public:

#### **2018-19**

17 <sup>th</sup> May 2018	Brecon Subud Hall
13 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	Brecon Subud Hall
8 <sup>th</sup> October 2018	Bryn Arw, site visit
10 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	Brecon Subud Hall

## Appendix IV

### Members Details

Name	Date Appointed to LAF
<b>Chair – Ian Maberley</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>As both a regular user of the BBNP rights of way network and a smallholder in one of the busier valleys within the Park, I can appreciate the pressures on the network and on the residents and landowners.</p> <p>I have particular interest in making access across the park an enjoyable and safe activity for legitimate users. I work closely in my area with the Police and Natural Resources Wales to limit illegal activities on the RoW network and access land.</p> <p>I'm also keen to see that large group activities are well managed and benefit where possible the Local Communities on which they impact.</p> <p>Membership of Organisations:            Director: Grwyne Fawr Community Interest Company (CIC)            Trustee/Director: Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre (CRIC)            Member: British Cycling</p>	
<b>Deputy Chair – Colin Woodley</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>Interests relevant to the BBNP LAF:            Farming            Common grazing            Cave exploration            Industrial heritage            Community work</p> <p>Membership of Organisations:            Committee member of the Farmers Union of Wales            Secretary of the Penderyn Commoners Association            Committee Member of the British Caving Association            Community Councillor for Ystradfellte            Community Councillor for Hirwaun and Penderyn.</p>	
<b>Stuart France</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>I have been a Brecon Beacons National Park resident since 1985. My leisure interests – mainly caving, hill walking, trail running and some mountain biking too – have been blessed with an abundance of local opportunities. My professional work concerns electronic counters to research visitor activity, particularly in the countryside, which brings me into contact with a wide range of outdoors professionals across the UK who manage land to which the public has access for leisure.</p> <p>There has been a good deal of uncertainty in the past few years with various Welsh Government consultations on access law reform here in Wales, thus possible changes in the role of LAFs: all of which have come to nothing. Different outdoors sports and pastimes, many represented amongst the interests of LAF members, are treated in different ways – and there is a degree of unfairness</p>	

about that when they cause no damage nor inconvenience to other users when carried out responsibly.

So I will be working for consistency, clarity and the development of responsible recreation across the whole activity spectrum whilst maintaining safeguards for the natural environment and the interests of all the people who live or work in or visit our National Park.

**Membership of Organisations:**

Access/Conservation Officer of the Cambrian Caving Council (CCC) since 2014. Representative of the CCC on the National Access Forum for Wales and the British Caving Association. Director of Cave Access Ltd, a non-profit company managing underground explorer access agreements. Member of mountaineering and caving clubs and RSPB.

**Dr Paul Sinnadurai FCIEEM**

**16<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

Paul has worked for the National Park Authority since 2000, serving as the Ecologist, Senior Ecologist and Policy Advisor, Conservation Manager and now Natural Resources Team Manager. He is a member of the Authority's Management Team and line manages the Rights of Way Officer Eifion Jones, Countryside and Access Projects Officer Richard Ball, Warden Manager Judith Harvey and Senior Ecologist and Climate Adaptation Advisor Dr Bradley Welch

**Dr Ian Jenkins**

**16<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

Ian is a tourism geographer who has specialised in areas of sustainability and adventure. A distinctive area of his work has been adventure tourism and access to national parks. In addition Ian has managed a number of adventure tourism courses in Wales, which involved close liaison with adventure companies and the issues of access to environmentally sensitive landscapes, including the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire National Parks. He has worked in Iceland and Switzerland on topics related to sustainable tourism in national parks, especially adventure tourism. His publications encompass a number of books, book chapters and articles on: sustainable tourism, climate change, adventure tourism and health & safety management.

**Membership of Organisations:**

Visiting Associate Professor University of Iceland

Previously:

Associate Professor University of Iceland

Research Fellow University of Nicosia

Director of Research LRG/Glion IHE, Switzerland

Director of Celt@s and SaiL UWTSO, Swansea

**Patrick Dobbs**

**16<sup>th</sup> November 2017 – 17<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

A continual user of the BBNP for recreational purposes on horseback and on foot for over 50 years. My main interest on the LAF is to reconcile the conflicting interests of farmers, commoners with those of visitors to the countryside. This will make the BBNP a pleasanter place for everyone.

<b>Phillipa Cherryson</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>Phillipa is a writer who is a keen horse rider and hill walker. A former reporter for Welsh newspapers and television, she now writes for UK-wide magazines and newspapers. She's been on the committee of the Vale of Usk Riding Club, in Abergavenny, for more than 10 years. Philippa owns her own horse and is a happy hacker and British Endurance rider. Her partner is a member of Longtown Mountain Rescue and she helps the team with publicity and press. As a smallholder she also understands the concerns of landowners and is a keen conservationist. Philippa's key interests are walking, horse riding and safety in the mountains.</p> <p>Membership of Organisations: Vale of Usk Riding Club, British Endurance, National Trust.</p>	
<b>Pamela Bell</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>I am a keen walker, swimmer and boater, and I enjoy these pastimes in conjunction with outdoor interests, including history, natural history, geology and archaeology.</p> <p>I have enjoyed living and working in the BBNP for 30 years, and currently serve as a Community Councillor. From first-hand experience and conversations with other residents, I understand the importance of access to the countryside in the area surrounding one's home; and the problems caused to residents by inappropriate activity. Having grown up in an inner city area, and been a voluntary youth worker for many years, I also have an appreciation of the importance of wider countryside access to city dwellers.</p> <p>While serving on this LAF, one of my main aims will be to represent those who seek access to either upland or lowland areas, including water and waterside, for sustainable quiet enjoyment, recreation or adventure. I am concerned that the current 'adventure tourism' agenda in Wales places too much emphasis on 'packaged adventure' with high-profile events and promotions which are increasingly distanced from sustainable tourism and the original ethos of the National Parks. I would like to see emphasis on recognition of public rights; facilitation of access; ensuring that rights of way over land are kept open; proactively using opportunities provided by legislation to facilitate access to varied terrain and inland water, while providing factual information which allows people, local or tourist, to take ownership of, plan and enjoy their own sustainable outdoor experience.</p> <p>Membership of Organisations: Life member of Field Studies Council and Youth Hostels Association Member and occasional volunteer: Blaenavon World Heritage Environment Group (BWHEG) and Aberystwyth History and Archaeology Society (AHAS) Work Related groups include: SWOAPG; DofE Providers; Local Tourist Associations. Currently serve as a Community Councillor for Llanelly Parish. One of the founder members of Waters of Wales – WoW campaign group. Member of Canoe Wales and British Canoeing</p>	
<b>David Sharman</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>To improve disabled access to new and existing rights of way. Also interested in planning.</p> <p>Membership of Organisations: Member of the Vale of Grwyney Community Council</p>	

<b>Denis J Murphy</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>As a professor of Biology and university lecturer on topics such as biodiversity, biogeography, environmental conservation and invasive species, I have a professional interest in the natural aspects of our local environment and regularly bring students on field trips to the National Park area.</p> <p>As a resident and landowner in the Park and a frequent user of its many outdoor attractions and facilities, I have a vested interest in ensuring that it is maintained in the best possible way. I also feel I can make a contribution to the future of the park for the sake of the wider community, including residents, businesses and visitors.</p> <p>Membership of Organisations:  Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology  Member of Society for Experimental Biology  Member of American Association for the Advancement of Science  Managing Editor, World Agriculture</p>	
<b>Hilda Marion Williams</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>As a Community Councillor she has a great deal of interest in improved access for members of the public with varying abilities.</p>	
<b>Mr Hywel Morgan</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>Beef and sheep farmer in Myddfai, in the home of the legendary Lady of the Lake and her sons The Physicians of Myddfai.</p> <p>Grazing rights and active grazier on Mynydd Du Common.</p> <p>Passionate about the mountain, Llyn y fan fach and the Brecon Beacons.</p> <p>Strong believer that graziers and town and city people and tourists can work together in the National Park.</p> <p>As farmers we need to connect more with city people.</p> <p>A father of two children and fluent Welsh speaker.</p> <p>Membership of Organisations:  Myddfai Community Councillor  Vice Chairman and Member of Black Mountains Graziers Association  Secretary and Member of Porwyr Myddfai Grazing association</p>	
<b>Debbie Hughes</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>I have lived in the Brecon Beacons National Park for 35 years. My husband and myself run a hill farm with mainly Welsh Mountain Sheep and a small herd of Highland cows.</p> <p>It is an iconic place to live and work and if I can make a small contribution towards preserving and enhancing the environment through a holistic approach that benefits both locals and visitor alike, I think my time will be well spent.</p> <p>My main priorities will be to highlight the need for improvement to the rhiw's and promote the cause of Welsh Mountain indigenous ponies on the Black Mountains.</p> <p>Membership of Organisations:  Black Mountains Graziers Association  Welsh Pony and Cob Society</p>	

<b>Josie Pearson</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>I have always enjoyed exploring the countryside that the BBNP has to offer with its spectacular scenery. I have lived in the North East end of the park for most of my life and since becoming a wheelchair user I have encountered that much of the BBNP is inaccessible to wheelchair user or those with mobility issues. I would like to help make the BBNP more accessible to all and I've been piloting a 'Miles without Stiles' project around the town where I live. I hope that the project ethos can be rolled out to the rest of the BBNP in time and the knowledge I have learnt along the way can be transferred to wider projects in the park.</p> <p>Membership of Organisations: Councillor for Hay Town Council Member of the Herefordshire LAF</p>	
<b>Ruth Pickvance</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fell and Trail Race Organiser in BBNP</li> <li>• Run Britain Race Director qualified</li> <li>• Former British Fell Champion</li> <li>• Former international level athlete</li> <li>• Director of Element: Element runs courses connected to activities, nature and the restorative well-being of the wilder outdoors in the National Park</li> <li>• Keen outdoor enthusiast</li> <li>• Woodland owner</li> </ul> <p>Membership of Organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Fellrunning Association</li> <li>• Fellrunning Association</li> <li>• Mynydd Du</li> <li>• Gwent Beekeepers Association</li> <li>• Gwent Wildlife Trust</li> <li>• National Trust</li> <li>• Mountain Training Association</li> </ul> <p>Formerly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of faculty at UWC Atlantic College</li> </ul> <p>Currently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Element</li> <li>• Working part time with Leadership Development Organisation Harthill Consulting</li> </ul>	
<b>Tracy Purnell</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>Ambassador for Ordnance Survey. Writes walking routes and articles for visitors to the national park. Spend most of my time walking or trail running within the park. Promotes dog friendly walks and responsible dog walking.</p>	
<b>Steve Rayner</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b>
<p>I am a canoeist, kayaker and hillwalker – so I have a strong interest in maintaining and improving access to both land and water for recreation within the Brecon Beacons National Park.</p>	

I undertake outdoor activity for recreation; for competition (canoe slalom and polo); as a voluntary coach and leader (for Brecon Canoe Club and the Scout Association); and as a part-time freelance instructor (working independently and for local centres) – so I have an interest in accessing land and water for a wide range of purposes.

I own a grass-let farm and hold commoners' rights near Libanus – so I also have an interest in protecting landowners' interests alongside increased recreational access.

I am the part-time Waterways & Environment Officer for Canoe Wales (the National Governing Body for paddle sport) and the part-time Coordinator for the South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group (representing outdoor activity businesses in South Wales) – so I have a particular interest in representing the views and interests of these two organisations.

Membership of Organisations:

Brecon Canoe Club (Chair & Coaching Officer).

Canoe Wales (voluntary Chair of Canoe Wales Slalom Committee; and part-time Waterways & Environment Officer, giving me membership of National Access Forum Wales).

British Mountaineering Council (individual member).

Brecknock Area Scouts (Activity Assistant).

South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group (part-time Coordinator).

Mynydd Illtud Commoners Association.

**Toby Veall**

**16<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

BSc ( Hons) Rural Environment Studies (Wye College, London University)

DipEd Outdoor Education Moray House college, Edinburgh.

Hobbies and interests included walking, climbing, canoeing, sailing, scuba diving and landscape and wildlife photography.

Worked extensively abroad in Africa, mainly in Zambia and Tanzania in outdoor education, tourism and aquaculture, particularly the Lake Tanganyika region

An accident in 2010 resulted in spinal cord injury and now a permanent wheelchair user. Current interests include disabled access to the outdoors, handbiking, photography, dog agility and writing.

**Chris Waterhouse**

**16<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

Trained as a geologist but served as a soldier before working for the British Horse Society.

I live in the Brecon Beacons National Park working locally as a warden for the Ministry of Defence.

I am also a volunteer Access and Bridleways Officer for the British Horse Society.

**Katherine Whitrow**

**16<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

National Farmers Union (NFU) – County Member

Great Forest Grazier

Beef & Sheep Farmer

Landowner in the Brecon Beacons National Park

Membership of Organisations:

NFU Cymru

## **APPENDIX V**

### **FURTHER READING**

#### LAF Annual Reports

All appointing authorities are required by statute to produce annual reports to cover the year ending 31 March. These can be obtained from the relevant LAF Secretary. Agendas, minutes and other papers are also available for individual LAF meetings.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; The Stationary Office Limited (2000).

#### National Assembly for Wales

The Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001; The Stationary Office Limited (2002).

#### Countryside Council for Wales

LAF Guidance 1: The Establishment of Local Access Forums – Advice & Best Practice Guidance (2002).

LAF Guidance 2: The Role Duties and Functions of Local Access Forums (2002).

Local Access Forums in Wales Annual Report & Directory 2003 (2004).