

Local Access Forum

Annual Report

2019-2020



Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum

Annual Report, April 2019 – November 2020

CONTENTS		Page
Chairman’s Foreword		2
Chairman's Report		2
A note from the Secretary		3
Introduction		4
The Year Reviewed		4
Appointing Authority Details	Appendix I	7
Area Covered By BBNP LAF	Appendix II	8
Meeting Details	Appendix III	9
Membership Details	Appendix IV	10
Further Reading	Appendix V	15

BBNP LAF ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Chairman's Foreword

Once again, I have to applaud the breadth of knowledge of the Members of the Forum and their willingness to make the meetings so effective and enjoyable. Even with the trials and tribulations caused by the COVID pandemic this year we were able to ensure that any necessary decisions were taken.

I am most fortunate to have such a diverse group of people – and even my wish from last year for off-road cyclists has been achieved! This is reinforced by my understanding, gleaned for discussions with the other Welsh LAF Chairmen, that we probably have the best mix of members anywhere in Wales. A quick look shows a nearly 50:50 female:male split, landowners, graziers farmers, cavers, wheelchair users, academics, walkers, canoeists, outdoor activities specialists, off-road cyclists, horse-riders, community councillors, outdoor events organisers and farming unions. Probably uniquely among LAFs everywhere, we have two Ordnance Survey 'Get Outside' Champions!

Ian Maberley

Chairman, Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum

Chairman's Report

As for most people, the latter half of the 2019-20 year has proved a trifle unusual but I am extremely grateful that Members have taken this very much in their stride and through use of e-mail and online meetings have continued to supply the advice and support to the Park.

This year has seen work ongoing on what is possibly going to be the biggest change in access legislation in Wales for many a year. It seems a very long time ago that the LAF responded to the Welsh Government's consultation document, but this year saw the start of work by the expert groups on the detail. In my role as Deputy National Representative of Welsh LAFs, I have been able to ensure that LAFs, and by extension Local Authorities, are kept apprised of the deliberations of these groups. Discussion with the NRW lead has led to an acceptance that their correspondences with LAF and their members is in plain language and not in 'expert speak'. Hopefully this will ensure that any proposals from the expert groups will be able to be properly studied and understood by the LAF members who are, after all and properly so, committed lay people, just as are those members of the wider public who will either benefit or suffer from the final outcomes.

This year has also seen the LAF take up with the WG Minister matters appertaining to the funding of access and RoW in the Park. The demands of the ROWIP and of the huge influx of visitors (legally or not so legally) during this COVID summer have appeared to have placed massive demands on the Access teams and we hope that our interventions will eventually pay off and a sensible level of funding will be allocated to what is, after all is said and done, a key facet in the lives of everyone. On behalf of all of the Members I would like to thank Paul, Eifion, Richard and Lisa for their hard work and forbearance.

Finally, it is really good to see BBNPA Members attending 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

This report covers the period from April 2019 – November 2020 in order to bring it in to line with the appointment cycle of current members. The current members of the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum (BBNP LAF) were appointed in November 2017 for a 3 year period and their term of office will come to an end in November of this year. 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.

Unfortunately the Covid pandemic has had an impact on the meeting cycle of the LAF, a meeting planned for June 2019 was postponed and following a change in regulations one meeting in October was held remotely.

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 16th 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, 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 2019 – 2020

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 4 meetings and 1 virtual meeting.

Area Statements

NRW has been charged with producing 7 Area Statements covering the whole of Wales. Each Area Statement outlines the key challenges facing that particular locality, what we can all do to meet those challenges, and how we can better manage our natural resources for the benefit of future generations. The Mid Wales AS includes sections on improving biodiversity, connecting people with places and sustainable land, water and air for example. Unfortunately the Brecon Beacons National Park falls into 4 AS areas and the BBNP LAF has clearly made the point to NRW that this is unsatisfactory. NRW has agreed to deal with issues relating to BBNP in a coordinated fashion and will be putting in place administrative systems to ensure good communications.

Walks on the Web

The BBNP LAF supported the work that BBNPA was doing regarding providing walk descriptions on its website. The walk descriptions include a grading system and a description of ground conditions that will enable visitors to decide which walks will be suitable for them individually. The LAF suggested that the BBNPA make this information available on an app when or if resources become available.

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 was pleased to see the ROWIP being formally adopted by the BBNPA on 29th October 2019.

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. Unfortunately this matter has still not been resolved but the LAF continues to put pressure on Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water to improve access for everyone at this location.

Funding Applications

The BBNPA's Step Changes project did not receive funding from ENRAW however The LAF lent its support to the Canals and Well being project (joint BBNPA / Powys County Council / Wildlife Trusts project) bid to ENRAW (Enabling Natural Resources and Well-Being) application. This project is designed to provide conditions that encourage greater participation in outdoor activity by a greater range of people by linking the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and Montgomeryshire Canal to communities and wildlife sites. The aims of the projects are to improve health and well-being as well as understanding and enjoyment of the countryside.

Proposed Brecon to Hay cycle path (Brecon to Hay Greenway)

The BBNP LAF enjoyed a presentation by Freya Morgan on the proposed Brecon to Hay Greenway. The proposal is looking at creating a traffic free path along the route of the old Brecon to Hay Railway. An initial feasibility study was commissioned and carried out by Sustrans, it found that a large part of the line is intact and that there are grounds to continue with the project. The 25km route is owned by multiple landowners and they would need to look at how to secure access, there are also a number of sections where the line has been built over and alternative routes would need to be considered.

Welsh Government Access Reform

The Welsh Government has established an Access Reform Advisory Group (ARAG) to advise on technical matters associated with its proposals to reform countryside access in Wales. ARAG comprises a steering group and 3 expert groups looking at proposed access reforms. Group 1 is looking at the extension of rights on Access Land designated under the CROW Act. group 2 is looking at changes to rights of way and group 3 is looking at digital mapping. Each group is made up of nine members, three each from the public sector, recreational sectors and landowner sectors. Richard Ball is a member of group 1, Lisa Lloyd is a member of group 3 and Eifion Jones sits on the Steering Group. The Steering group will take the findings of the expert groups and deliver recommendations to the Minister.

The LAF expressed some concerns that LAFs were not included in the process and advised NRW to consult LAFs which it subsequently has done.

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

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

APPENDIX III

MEETING DETAILS

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

2019-20

11 th April 2019	BBNPA Office, Brecon
9 th July 2019	BBNPA Office, Brecon
13 th November 2019	BBNPA Office, Brecon
20 th February 2020	BBNPA Office, Brecon
8 th October 2020	virtual meeting via 'Lifesize'

Appendix IV

Members Details

Name	Date Appointed to LAF
Chair – Ian Maberley	16th November 2017
<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>	
Deputy Chair – Colin Woodley	16th November 2017
<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>	
Pamela Bell	16th November 2017
<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</p>	

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.

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

Phillipa Cherryson

16th November 2017

Philippa 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.

Membership of Organisations:

Vale of Usk Riding Club, British Endurance, National Trust.

Stuart France

16th November 2017

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. 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 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.

Debbie Hughes

16th November 2017

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.

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.

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.

Membership of Organisations:
Black Mountains Graziers Association
Welsh Pony and Cob Society

Mr Siôn James

May 2019

Dr Ian Jenkins

16th 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

Mr Hywel Morgan

16th November 2017

Beef and sheep farmer in Myddfai, in the home of the legendary Lady of the Lake and her sons The Physicians of Myddfai.

Grazing rights and active grazier on Mynydd Du Common.

Passionate about the mountain, Llyn y fan fach and the Brecon Beacons.

Strong believer that graziers and town and city people and tourists can work together in the National Park.

As farmers we need to connect more with city people.

A father of two children and fluent Welsh speaker.

Membership of Organisations:
Myddfai Community Councillor
Vice Chairman and Member of Black Mountains Graziers Association
Secretary and Member of Porwyr Myddfai Grazing association

Denis J Murphy

16th November 2017

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.

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.

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

Josie Pearson

16th November 2017

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.

Membership of Organisations:

Councillor for Hay Town Council
 Member of the Herefordshire LAF

Ruth Pickvance

16th November 2017

- Fell and Trail Race Organiser in BBNP
- Run Britain Race Director qualified
- Former British Fell Champion
- Former international level athlete
- Director of Element: Element runs courses connected to activities, nature and the restorative well-being of the wilder outdoors in the National Park
- Keen outdoor enthusiast
- Woodland owner

Membership of Organisations:

- Welsh Fellrunning Association
- Fellrunning Association
- Mynydd Du
- Gwent Beekeepers Association
- Gwent Wildlife Trust
- National Trust
- Mountain Training Association

Formerly:

- Head of faculty at UWC Atlantic College

Currently:

- Director of Element
- Working part time with Leadership Development Organisation Harthill Consulting

Tracy Purnell

16th November 2017

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.

Steve Rayner	16th November 2017
<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> <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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	
David Sharman	16th November 2017
<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>	
Dr Paul Sinnadurai FCIEEM	16th November 2017
<p>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</p>	
Toby Veall	16th November 2017
<p>BSc (Hons) Rural Environment Studies (Wye College, London University) DipEd Outdoor Education Moray House college, Edinburgh.</p> <p>Hobbies and interests included walking, climbing, canoeing, sailing, scuba diving and landscape and wildlife photography.</p> <p>Worked extensively abroad in Africa, mainly in Zambia and Tanzania in outdoor education, tourism and aquaculture, particularly the Lake Tanganyika region</p> <p>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.</p>	
Chris Waterhouse	16th 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

16th 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

Hilda Marion Williams

16th November 2017

As a Community Councillor she has a great deal of interest in improved access for members of the public with varying abilities.

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).

