

Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum

Annual Report, April 2013 – July 2014

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BBNP LAF ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

Chairman's Foreword

It is with deep regret I report the sudden death of our longest serving member of the Forum, Gwyn Gwillim, on April 2nd. Gwyn brought valuable insight to our discussions and decisions with not only his shrewd knowledge of the farming community but also from his many other contributions to community activities in Talgarth and the Black Mountains area. He will be sorely missed.

The three year term of office of the current Forum ends on August 8th, the last formal meeting is scheduled for July 16th; John Cook has agreed with my suggestion that this Annual Report takes us up to the July Forum. Last year's 2012-3 Report had been completed before the April 2013 Forum so, when it was finally presented in the autumn, an update was handed out, which is now incorporated in this Report for 2013-4.

In October I was re-elected Chair and Colin Woodley continues as Vice-chair; we also welcomed new members to the Forum:

Phillipa Cherryson – horse rider and journalist who has taken on a role in publicity for the Forum and she is a link observer at Monmouthshire LAF meetings

Patrick Dobbs – a farmer keenly interested in outdoor recreation in the west of the Park

And, in January, Jon Everington i/c Glasbury House Outdoor Education Centre and who is a link observer at Powys LAF meetings

Lisa Lloyd, a member of the Parks' Rights of Way Team, is our new Minute Secretary.

Chairman's Report

(This Report covers the period embraced by Forum meetings in April, July and October 2013 and January, April and July 2014.)

The impacts of setting up Natural Resources Wales and of studies into ROWIP and Active Travel have been considered by the Forum. As Chair I have attended four all-Wales LAF Chairs Meetings and the Conference in June 2013. At this Conference our Forum member Professor Denis Murphy presented a draft for 'Conduct for Shared Use Routes' which will hopefully be taken as a blueprint when the proposed Green Paper is taken forward. The importance of an updated code for multi-use routes is highlighted when a variety of users need to share use of canal towing paths, for example.

Large scale events are an important part of the Park's life but managing them without detriment to those who live and work in the Park, and without an impact on the natural and historic environment is high on the LAF Agenda and was subject of a Press Release last December.

A major **economic concern** in maintaining the Park is deterioration in Rights of Way – this can arise from heavily used routes arising from events, routes to 'honeypots' such as Penyfan or on easily eroded ground such as the Eastern Beacons and climate change with more extreme rainstorms. We have been encouraged by the excellent volunteer contribution to upland maintenance led by Richard Ball and Jason Rees on most weekends during the year – but this often calls for transport of

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heavy materials to more remote locations – tractor or airlifting. A team of 24, the ‘Black Mountains Volunteers’, whom I joined for an hour last December, had put in 150 day’s equivalent work in 2013 and had come at their own expense each time from as far afield as Swansea, Cardiff, Llandeilo and Leominster to Pandy (Abergavenny) to repair upland routes.

In January some of the Forum attended a seminar in ‘Managing Public Access on Private Land’ – a lively meeting which gave food for thought. This proved very relevant to an exercise that members of the Forum along with the Rights of Way Team carried out during the first five months of this year in reviewing all Permissive Routes and Areas in the National Park. A brief background to this may be helpful: about a decade ago landowners and farmers were able to enter an agri-environmental scheme Tir Gofal which included new temporary rights of way or access to open areas. These only existed for as long as Tir Gofal continued and were called Permissive Routes/Areas but they could not be shown on any **permanent** guides such as Ordnance Survey. Ahead of the terminal date of Dec 2013 for Tir Gofal a successor scheme, Glastir, was established, and fresh applications to join have to be made. Offering Permissive Routes/Areas, whether those previously under Tir Gofal or new ones, gave added value to applications seeking entry to Glastir **provided the Local Access Forum considered they were routes/areas of value to the Park.**

It became essential, therefore, that the Park had an up-to-date list of the previous permissive routes/areas together with a list of any new ones brought to our attention which could be of value. During this spring several members of the Access Forum, along with the Parks Rights of Way team, walked 63 linear routes and checked 22 areas and reported in detail their condition, route markings and their value to the Park’s network. **They found that over 90% of the linear routes and two-thirds of the areas were of significant merit and should be welcomed in a Glastir application to become parts of the network.** The National Trust also has 7 permissive areas and these are still available. Eifion Jones has contacted a range of environmental and historic organisations to provide details of any new routes for access to sites or areas containing them that they would like added to the list. As a result two new paths to historic sites and one to open access land have been added to the list provided to Glastir.

Under Tir Gofal many permissive routes were under used, partly because they could not be printed on maps or in guides. I have written on behalf of the Forum to the Minister emphasising not only should the Natural Resources Wales’ website of permissive access be regularly updated but that maps, guides etc. be encouraged to direct the reader to that website when planning a route.

Members of the Forum were asked to respond to three questions about the Visitor Management Plan. The gist of their concerns was that consultation with users was uneven – education group activities were incorrectly described as mostly upland walking, minority pursuits neglected and the economic implications of recommendations lacked helpful guidance or clarity of priority.

Guest speakers at Forum meetings have been David Leighton of RCAHM, Aberystwyth on Ancient Upland Trackways, Dr Tim Rich of the Welsh National Herbarium on Endemic Plants in the Beacons, Louise Trickbank of Land Use Consultants and Judith Harvey on the excellent contribution of volunteers working with Rights of Way maintenance teams. We receive regular updates on ongoing concerns such as larch and ash infection.

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We maintain close links with neighbouring LAFs. We exchange agendas and when issues such as the A465 duelling, which affected the Park, was on the Monmouthshire LAF agenda one of our Members observed and reported back. Ideally this should occur more often but the funds to pay Member's expenses are tightly budgeted.

On behalf of the Forum I have responded to the consultation last winter by Natural Resources Wales after attending the NRW's stakeholder's meeting at Garwnant last July 2013. The plan for 2014-7 was published on July 1st 2014.

In conclusion I would pay tribute to colleagues within the National Park whose efficiency and courtesy have made my decade as a Forum Member a most satisfying experience. In particular I thank Julian Atkins, Eifion Jones and Warden's, Lisa Lloyd for her most careful minuting of Forum meetings and, above all, Richard Ball as Forum Secretary for ensuring that all runs smoothly.

Mike Scott Archer
Chair, Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum

A note from the Secretary

During the past year the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum (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.

In September the LAF welcomed three new members who have already made significant contributions.

Over the past year members have spent a significant amount of time identifying and assessing permissive routes on a speculative basis which might be included in Glastir schemes. We would urge the Welsh Government to consult the LAF on individual schemes as and when they are submitted in future as this would be a much more efficient way of progressing.

This will be the final Annual Report for this cohort of members as their terms come to an end in August. I would like to thank them for all their contributions and especially thank Mike Scott Archer for chairing the Forum and spending a significant amount of time on LAF issues outside the meeting cycle.

Finally I would like to echo the sentiments of the Chairman regarding Gwyn Gwillim who I have known for over 10 years, he will be a sorely missed friend.

Richard Ball
Secretary, Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum.

Introduction

This Brecon Beacons National Park Local Access Forum (LAF) was established 9th August 2011 and initially comprised 14 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), the 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.breconbeacons.org, 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 2013 – 2014

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 Visitor Management Plan were discussed at a number of different meetings as they were significant areas of work.

LAF Administration

The new LAF was established on 9th August 2011 and it was agreed that the Chairman would be elected annually by the members. Mike Scott Archer was re-elected as Chairman, and Colin Woodley was re-elected as Deputy Chairman on 10th October 2012

Rights of Way

The LAF was regularly updated regarding progress on implementation of BBNPA's ROWIP. Continued funding by the Welsh Government was acknowledged as very positive although there was some disappointment that the funding had reduced over the past years.

The LAF was also consulted on rights of way orders at each meeting.

Brecon Beacons National Park Visitor Management Plan

The BBNPA commissioned Land Use Consultants to produce a Visitor Management Plan covering the National Park. The LAF Chairman was a member of the Steering Group leading the project and the LAF was consulted on its development on a number of occasions.

Glastir agri environment scheme

All members were actively involved in identifying and assessing routes for potential inclusion within Glastir schemes within the Park. The Welsh Government which administers the scheme has stated that landowners would not receive any payment for permissive routes unless they were recommended by the LAF

Wales Government Access Review

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The LAF was kept fully informed of the WG Access Review and look forward to the subsequent Green Paper later in the year.

Volunteering in the BBNP

The LAF was fully supportive of various BBNPA volunteer schemes many of which had benefits in terms of access to the countryside.

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.

APPENDIX III

MEETING DETAILS

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

2013-14

19 th April 2013	Brecon Beacons NPA Visitor Centre
10 th July 2013	Brecon Beacons NPA Visitor Centre
9 th October 2013	Brecon Beacons NPA Visitor Centre
22 nd January 2014	Brecon Beacons NPA Visitor Centre

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Members Details

NAME	Date Appointed To LAF	Interests Represented
Mike Scott Archer (Chairman)	Elected Chairman Aug 2011 and re-elected 9 th October 2013	Retired headmaster. Vice-chair Powys LAF. Member of Council for British Archaeology, Cambrian Archaeological Association, Llangynidr Local History Society, Brecon Beacons Park Society (Walk Leader), Cambrian Mountain Society, Ramblers, CPRW and RSPB. Interests include upland history and archaeology, mountain walking, the impact of climate change and research into historic roads and tracks.
Colin Woodley (Vice Chairman)	Elected Vice Chairman August 2011 and re-elected 9 th October 2013	Farms in the Hepste Valley. Conservation officer for the South Wales Caving Club. Chaired the national governing body for caving; the Cambrian Caving Council for eight years. Secretary of the Penderyn Commoners Association & member of the local committee of the FUW. Member of the Ystradfellte CC and chair of the Hirwaun & Penderyn CC. Interests include; cave & mine exploration, underground access, industrial history and works as a fireman on the Welsh Highland Railway.
Gwyn Gwillim	Appointed August 2011 – April 2014	Farmer in eastern area of the Park. Member (and former chairman) of Black Mountains Graziers Association and NFU. Interests include farming, local history and protection of the countryside.
Julian Atkins	Appointed August 2011	Director of the department of BBNPA responsible for Countryside and Land Management and, in particular, access and rights of way and warden area teams. In addition, the department is responsible for sustainable tourism, visitor services (including education), information and interpretation
Pamela Bell	Appointed August 2011	Member, of the Welsh Canoeing Association, elected to the Board of Directors in 1995 and has chaired

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		the Welsh National Access Committee for 13 years. Also a member of the YHA, Coracle Society, River & Lake Swimming Association and Outdoor Swimming Society. Lifelong interest in the outdoors, spending most weekends and holidays hostelling, camping, canoeing and climbing. Since 1988 has run an outdoor activity business working within and beyond the BBNP. Committed to the campaign for land reform legislation in Wales, similar to that passed in Scotland in 2003.
Janet Bailey	Appointed August 2011	A keen walker within the National Park with a great deal of interest in its natural and cultural history, being an archaeologist she is a member of a local history society and co-ordinates volunteer activities to groups who wish to expand their knowledge of the cultural heritage of the area.
Ian Mabberley	Appointed August 2011	As a resident he has a keen interest in the safety of the users of the National Park, working with landowners and other organisations to stop the illegal use of open access land, such as off road vehicles and illegal raves. He is also a Community Councillor, director of the Crickhowell Information and Resource Centre, also a member of the National Trust.
Phillipa Cherryson	Appointed 24 th September 2013	Main area of interest is equestrianism, as a keen hacker and endurance rider access within the national park is very important to me. I am a regular long distance walker and have personal knowledge of most of the RoW within the BBNP. I am also a landowner living within a farming community in the national park and can understand and share the concerns that access can cause.
Denis Murphy	Appointed August 2011	Living within the Brecon Beacons National Parks he is keen naturalist and wildlife enthusiast. As a Professor of Biology at the University of Glamorgan, he lectures such as biodiversity, environmental conservation and invasive species. He is a regular panellist on the Radio 4 Home Planet programme answering questions on the natural environment. Being a member of a running, orienteering and cycling club he regularly either takes part or helps to organise events with in the National Park. As a LAF member his main interest is to insure that appropriate areas of the National Park are available to widest possible range of users, but also ensuring

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		that such access is managed in order to maximise the long term sustainability type of use and to minimise the environmental footprint of visitor use. He is a member of the Welsh Athletics and several professional organisations related to his academic work.
David Sharman	Appointed August 2011	He is a member of Vale of Grwyney Community Council and also Chairman Glagrwyny Village Hall. Having lived in the countryside most of his life he has a great deal of interest in the maintenance of the Rights of Way network with added importance to disabled access.
Jon Everington	Appointed 24 th September 2013	Since I was a small child I've been fascinated by the "great outdoors". At the age of seven I climbed my first mountain (Snowdon) and the rest, as they say, is history. I've now worked in the outdoor education industry for over 35 years and been a resident and outdoor education provider in the Brecon Beacons National Park since 1981. Whilst I now deliver a range of outdoor activities my first loves are mountains and rivers so, if I'm honest, this is where my passion, and therefore, my access interests lie.
Patrick Dobbs	Appointed 24 th September 2013	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.
Pavel Vitek	Appointed August 2011	Member of the National Trust, Ramblers Association, Soil Association, Youth Hostel Association, Llangattock Green Valleys and International Mountain Leader Association He has a great deal of interest in sustainable tourism, developing local economies and businesses, while also enjoying all aspects of conservation
Hilda Williams	Appointed August 2011	As a Community Councillor she has a great deal of interest in improved access for members of the public with varying ability's.
David Mantle	Appointed August 2011, membership ceased 10 th Oct 2012	Member of Llangynidr Community Council and Chairman of their Rights of Way Committee. Committee member of Duke of Beaufort's Commoners and Walls of Llangynidr and committee member and trustee for Llangynidr Burial Ground Trust. Chairman of Talybont on Usk Sheep Society and vice chairman of Llangynidr Agricultural Show Society. Interests include rights of way on private

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		and common land, access issues within the local community and youth involvement with projects to create awareness of what is around us within the National Park. Is keen to see a sustainable future for people living and working in the National Park.
David Thomas	Appointed August 2011, membership ceased 19 th July 2012	Member of the Tawe Uchaf Community Council and the Ystradgynlais Access Group. An active walker for many years and familiar with the footpaths in the south of the National Park, with a special interest and knowledge of walks on the Carmarthen Fans. He has a particular concern in making as many paths as possible open to people with disabilities. Prior to an accident in the late 80's, he was an experienced rock climber and caver familiar with caves in the Upper Swansea and Neath Valleys. He's interested in local history, and has a degree in Economic and Social History and Politics. He worked for 30 years in the food retail industry, retiring early in 2008 after 10 years as a senior manager with a supermarket. He is currently project manager on the Nant Llech Project, which is a joint venture between Tawe Uchaf Community Council and BBNPA.

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).