

BBNP LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Confirmed Minutes of the 11th Meeting held at 2.00pm on Thursday 2nd September, 2010 at the BBNPA Headquarters, Brecon

Present

Chairman:- John Evans (JE)

Secretary: - Richard Ball (RB)

Mike Scott-Archer (MSA)

Michael Ash (MA)

David Thomas (DT)

Neil Bennett (NB)

Julian Atkins (JuA)

Pamela Bell (PB)

Jeremy Atkinson (JA)

Observers:

Eifion Jones (EJ)

Rights of Way Officer, BBNPA

Kirsty Mallindine (KM)

Access Assistant, BBNPA

Avril Barnes (AB)

Rights of Way Assistant, BBNPA

One member of the public was present: Charles de Winton (CdW), Powys LAF Chairman.

1. Welcome and Apologies

JE welcomed members and the observer. Apologies for absence were received from Helen Lloyd-Jones (HLJ), Gwyn Gwillim, Colin Woodley (CW) and Graham Davies.

2. Confirmation of Minutes from the Meeting of 10 June 2010

The minutes were accepted with no alterations other than 'of' in line 3 of item 1 was altered to 'for'. It was agreed that JE should sign them as a true record.

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes from Site Meeting of 19 August 2010

The minutes were accepted with no alterations other than 'Society' was added after Open Spaces in the first line of the second paragraph. It was agreed that JE should sign them as a true record.

3. Matters Arising not otherwise appearing on Agenda

3.1 NAW Sustainability Committee – Water Related Recreation

A report was published in June 2010.

PB said that it was too early to comment and that people would have to wait and see what comes out of the strategy produced.

RB informed members that delivering the Splash project was proving frustrating. Particular problems had been encountered with Welsh Water / Dwr Cymru, but hopefully this is being addressed.

3.2 Hay Festival

HLJ is trying to organize a navigation course at Hay Festival. As she was not present at the meeting it was decided to postpone this item until the next meeting.

3.3 Planning Application Advertisements Affecting RoWs

JuA had sought clarification of this matter from his colleagues in the Planning department but had received no response to date. The item is to be carried forward to the December meeting.

3.4 Relationship with PAROW

JuA presented a paper (attached to these minutes) proposing how to take this matter forward.

JE asked members if they would like to endorse this proposal. Five members voted in favour and one member, JA, abstained.

Action Point: JuA to proceed with recommendations in paper.

3.5 Community Council Support for Local Footpaths

BBNPA had written to town and community councils within the Brecon Beacons National Park and to date has received 11 replies. Brecon town council maintain paths across their parks and Llangorse community council maintain their village green. Talybont-on-Usk said that although they do not spend any money on PROWs they do report obstructions and illegal usage of paths, and do get involved in one-off projects.

3.6 National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

Bradley Welch, NPMP Officer for BBNPA, was unable to attend the meeting but had informed RB that proofs for the report were being examined that day and it was anticipated that the English version would be returned from the printers on 17 September 2010 for distribution. The Welsh version will follow shortly.

4. Brecon Beacons Cycling and Mountain Biking Strategy

KM had circulated copies of the Brecon Beacons Cycling and Mountain Biking Strategy and had asked members to comment prior to the meeting. RB had only received one reply.

MSA considered the strategy to be a carefully thought through proposal although he could find no hint of liaison with schools and provision of safe cycling routes. He said circular routes in and around towns could be linked together to encourage children to cycle to school and this would help reduce the number of cars.

JE referred to table three on page 38 and asked for the cost being 'major' to be quantified. RB referred to the same table, under 'key issues', that stated 'costs of new routes are high – typically £100,000 per kilometre'.

JE voiced concern to the wording 'all off-road cycling' on page 25, second paragraph of 6.2 Strategic Priorities, line four. He felt that this could be confused as including motor biking, which is illegal, and should be made clearer.

MA informed members that the Beacons Bus from Cardiff to Brecon has the facility to carry approximately 20 bikes and has become the victim of its own success. Often it has to leave people behind because it is full. He said that it unfortunately only runs on Sundays and thought it should operate seven days a week. He asked for this message to be relayed to the authors of the report.

RB said he would pass all comments on.

Action Point: KM to forward minutes to authors of the report.

5. Offas Country

Ruth Coulthard (RC), Visitor Services Manager for BBNPA, told members that this is a project based on the Black Mountains. The project emerged in 2007 from a cross border Memorandum of Understanding between Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Advantage West Midland and a long list of more local partners. The whole project is worth approximately £1.2 million and the BBNPA is able to bid for a project worth £250,000 (80% funded externally, staff time can be used for match funding) over a three year period.

Currently the BBNPA are proposing the following:

Improving the Walking Offer

- Develop, interpret and digitise 6 walks within Black Mountains for Park Explorer – prioritising those accessible by public transport;
- Develop ‘Walkers are Welcome’ programmes with clusters and communities in Hay, Talgarth & Crickhowell (Abergavenny will be addressed by Adventa);
- Research and implement a Visitor Payback project

Information & Interpretation

- Develop and distribute 50 Cross Border Walking Map Boards
- Research, develop and disseminate a Sustainable Walking Code of Conduct
- Develop interpretation of the area and its walking resource for use in local TICs (Hay, Talgarth, Crickhowell, Abergavenny)

Community Engagement

- Develop and implement training on walking knowledge for guided walks leaders, businesses and Information Centres (including non-NPA centres)
- Community Access Management project – recruiting, training and equipping volunteers to help monitor and maintain upland footpaths and other access routes (led by Access Officer)

Walking Promotion

- Develop integrated Walking Tourism website based on Park Explorer but giving more information on the walking product on offer, making links to other parts of the area’s strengths and communicating environmental sensitivities

- Research and implement innovative ways of marketing Guided Walks

Sustainable Transport

- Develop Green Transport Nodes in Hay, Talgarth, Crickhowell and Abergavenny: car free walks, interchange signage, taxi links/training, new web pages, etc, working with community/clusters

Monitoring

- Undertaking visitor satisfaction surveys in the Walkers are Welcome towns aimed at walkers
- Installing and monitoring visitor counters at strategic locations to aid long term visitor management

Consultants have been appointed to produce a bid that will hopefully be submitted by the end of September. It is envisaged that a decision will be received in January 2011 and if the bid is successful, delivery will commence in April 2011.

MA asked if bus routes, with reliable services, could be added to the map produced, which RC thought a good idea.

RC confirmed that BBNP LAF will be consulted when deciding on the six walking routes.

JuA told members that environmental messages (*e.g.* how to take care of the countryside and reduce erosion by keeping to the path) will build on the Gorge Walking Code of Conduct.

6. Park Explorer Website

Paul Funnel, IT Manager for BBNPA, gave a demonstration of the website Park Explorer. The original inception was a walking website but has evolved to include other pastimes such as horse riding and cycling. The site not only includes routes and maps but is a show case for the area.

Members can access the site themselves using <http://www.breconbeacons.org/parkexplorer/> but were warned that the site is still in development.

MA asked if bus stops had been included. PF said that he had bus stop locations and routes that linked into the park but he did not have timetables. This information is held by travel companies.

MSA commented that the website could be used for education. PF said that he was already in discussions with schools that would like to develop geography modules on GIS.

7. Glastir – Permissive Access

EJ, RB, and JE met with Joanne Rees from WAG on 30 June 2010 to discuss permitted access under Tir Gofal.

EJ and AB had walked 23 routes and reported that, in general, they were useful and recommended that most be retained. A few were recommended to be withdrawn as it was considered that the public were not using them. He added that more attention should be placed on the management of these routes, with improved latches on gates and better vegetation control. He felt that waymarking was sporadic and confusing and that signage generally is confined to waymarks and small plastic information signs. This could be improved with the use of tall posts resulting in the signs being more obvious. Waymarking often is only in one direction and should be in both. Several routes had maps but these did not include any orientation for the walker and often were old and faded. Of the stiles that had been erected, many were sub-standard, in bad repair and dangerous due to their design. EJ said that furniture should comply with British Standards as there is a duty of care to members of the public that use the permissive routes. Stiles should be checked regularly repaired as needed.

JA asked how the public learn where permissive routes are to which RB replied that they are on the CCW website, some are waymarked but they are not on Ordnance Survey maps.

CdW surmised that what had been discovered in the BBNP was probably representative of the whole of Wales.

8. ROWIP Implementation and Funding

EJ reported that projects had been sent to CCW and approved. A claim for the first quarter has been submitted.

JE said LAFs across Wales should be lobbying for more money for RoWs. A letter should be drafted from all welsh LAFs, but he felt that accurate information was needed for a suitable argument. Others felt that there was enough information already available for the letter to be written as soon as possible.

CdW said that this was an opportune moment to put a case forward as there would be job losses in Powys County Council if ROWIP is withdrawn after three years and nothing replaces it.

9. RoW Orders

9.1 Talgarth

An order was made on 15 July 2010 but it was objected to.

EJ added that orders had been made on 8 July 2010 for footpath 486 at Llanfihangel Crucorney and footpaths 1, 6, and 7 at Crai but both were objected to.

JE suggested that in future this item is renamed as 'Orders Made'.

9.2 Crucorney: Footpath 146 Bettws

EJ has discovered the new land owner and they are now involved in correspondence. EJ has suggested a fresh application.

10. North Wales Outdoor Partnership

This item was adjourned until the December meeting as MS was not present.

11. LAFs Conference

JE gave a brief verbal report.

11.1 NAFW Meeting, 13 July

JE gave a brief verbal report.

12. Meeting with Michael German

JE gave a brief verbal report and notes taken by him are attached to these minutes

13. Information Items

13.1 Visitor Centre Feasibility Study

RC wrote to consultees on 21 June 2010 and the consultation is now complete.

MSA emphasized the need for the building to be of a zero carbon design. MA asked for the road layout to be thought through and recommended a turning circle for buses and hard standing for pedestrians waiting for a bus.

JuA enquired if any of the members had taken part. MA had filled in a questionnaire.

13.2 New Members of NPA

Details regarding recent appointees to the NPA had been circulated prior to the meeting.

13.3 Brecknock Access Group – service level agreement for advice on planning matters

A service level agreement between the BBNPA and Brecknock Access Group (BAG) for BAG to provide advice to NPA planners regarding access statements and development control matters is being negotiated.

13.4 LDP / TAN 6

The LDP / TAN 6, Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities, was launched at the Royal Welsh Show. It aims to increase the supply of affordable housing, extending the scope of essential dwellings, assisting new entrants to farming and support small scale energy projects.

13.5 Possible Merger of CCW, EAW and FCW

JE informed members that WAG is considering whether to merge CCW, EAW and FCW into one organization but this would require primary legislation.

RB said that there would be a meeting in October between CCW, FCW and the Welsh NPA Access Officers, and more may be known about how this proposal would affect access management after that.

JE noted that Michael Smith from CCW who used to attend the LAF meetings no longer did so. MSA suggested that JE invites Jont Bulbeck to come along to the next meeting as a CCW representative.

Action Point: JE to invite Jont Bulbeck to attend the December meeting.

13.6 Powys LAF

MSA gave a brief verbal report. Notes attached to these minutes

13.7 Beacons Way Steering Group

MSA gave a brief verbal report. Notes attached to these minutes

13.8 Waun Fignen Felen

A paper was presented at the National Access Forum (NAF) for Wales in July regarding work carried out on Waun Fignen Felen (WFF). Anthony Richards, Access Officer of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, questioned whether the matter should be considered by NAF as it was of local concern.

JuA informed members that WFF is an upland bog above Dan-yr-Ogof show caves. In 2004 a programme of restoration works to eroded peat began. The recent use of plastic shuttering has been objected to by certain parties. Plastic shuttering has been used by other NPs with positive effects. Following discussions with concerned parties and the Environment Agency Wales, the plastic shuttering was removed. He added that since the project began there has been definite progress in the restoration of the bog and the BBNPA has full confidence in the staff involved and works undertaken.

JuA told members that a presentation will be given to BBNPA members on 22 October 2010 and a repeat presentation can be given to the LAF members at the next meeting.

DT said that due to the peat bog's deterioration, loose peat washed into the show caves was having a damaging effect. He was surprised that complaints were coming from the show cave's owner.

14. Agenda Items for December Meeting

Items suggested for the December meeting are:

- Water Related Recreation (Gez Richards)
- Hay Festival 2011 (HLJ)
- National Park Management Plan (Bradley Welch)
- Glas Tir – target level
- Waun Fignen Felen (JuA)
- Establish Bridleway Principles
- Sunday Beacons Bus – How the bus company deals with its success and suggestions on how to utilise the bus once it arrives in Brecon
- How to encourage members to attend meetings more regularly

15. Any Other Business

15.1 Llanthony Touch Screen

JE was approached by a member of the public asking where the touch screen at Llanthony had gone. RC explained that it had only worked intermittently and the funds from the set-up costs had run out. It would have cost £10,000 to replace the unit and a further £2,000 annually for the maintenance and provision of broadband. RB said it had been unreliable and proved not to be in the best location.

15.2 Mynydd Illtyd Site Visit

JE thanked NB and EJ for arranging the site visit

15.3 Monmouthshire County Council Publication

JE brought to member's attention a book published by Monmouthshire County Council entitled the A to Z of Rights of Way Problems, Policy and Protocols. He described it as a useful working handbook. Copies can be obtained from Monmouthshire County Council:

e-mail: countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01633 644850

Post: County Hall, Turnpike Road, Cwmbran, Torfaen, NP44 2XH

15.4 Craig-y-nos

JE requested an update on Craig-y-nos. JuA said that a café is operating on site in the potting shed and discussions are taking place for an enlarged operation in the main building.

15.5 CCW Newsletter

JE asked if the Recreation and Access Newsletter produced by CCW was still published. RB said that a newsletter was still produced but the title had changed to Enjoying the Outdoors! JE asked for it to be distributed amongst members.

Action Point: KM to circulate latest newsletter to members.

The meeting closed at 16:35