

## BBNP LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

### Confirmed Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting held at 2.00pm on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2008 at the Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre

#### **Present**

Chairman:- John Evans (JE)

Secretary:- Richard Ball (RB)

Gwyn Gwillim (GG)  
Helen Lloyd Jones (HLJ)  
David Mantle (DM)  
Mike Scott-Archer (MSA)  
Martin Skinner (MS)  
Richard Stow (RS)  
Steve Rayner (SR)  
Colin Woodley (CW)  
Pamela Bell (PB)  
Neil Bennett (NB)  
John Cook (JC)

#### **Observers:**

Avril Barnes (AB)	Rights of Way Assistant, BBNPA
Eifion Jones (EJ)	Rights of Way Officer, BBNPA
Kirsty Mallindine (KM)	Access Assistant, BBNPA
Ryland Jones (RJ)	SUSTRANS Deputy Director Wales
Annie Lawrie (AL)	Visitor Transport Officer for BBNPA
Geoffrey Williams	Chairman Carmarthenshire LAF

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

JE welcomed members, observer and guest speakers Ryland Jones and Annie Lawrie. An apology for absence was received from Michael Smith of The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). The Secretary informed the meeting that the papers sent to Graham Davies (GD) had been returned as 'Gone Away'. The Secretary requested that correspondence be done by e-mail wherever possible.

#### **2(4). SUSTRANS**

RJ explained that SUSTRANS is the country's leading sustainable transport charity, implementing practical sustainable solutions for transport challenges whilst encouraging tourism, a healthy lifestyle, helping to combat climate change and promoting environmental awareness. SUSTRANS was established 30 years ago, initially buying disused railway lines to convert into cycle ways and footpaths to more recently working on sustainable transport projects such as safe routes cycling to school and TravelSmart which offers help and information to people looking to change how they travel.

At present the National Cycle Network covers 12,000 miles of which 1,270 miles are in Wales. He estimated that the Celtic and Taff Trail Routes had 2,000,000 user trips which generated and safeguarded 1,400 jobs.

RJ concluded his presentation with examples of future projects. The Valleys Cycle Network is a seven year project, due to start in 2009, linking Abergavenny to Carmarthen, a 250 miles route. Route 43 Network will connect Swansea with Builth Wells via the

Swansea Valley and the Brecon Beacons National Park. Most of the route is awaiting development, although a 13 mile traffic-free section from Swansea to Ystradgynlais is open. It is thought that the southern end of this route will attract community use while the northern end will appeal to leisure users.

RS expressed concerns regarding safety at interfaces between cycle routes and trunk roads. RJ explained that the Trunk Road Agency is a semi-autonomous agency that receives its funding from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). It sets aside £1 million p.a. to fund projects to interface trunk roads and cycle networks. Larger schemes take first priority from this so unfortunately smaller ones can be left out.

When asked how Sustrans funded projects, RJ gave details of Connect2, the Big Lottery funded walking and cycling project. Over the next 5 years (to 2013) £50 million of Big Lottery Funding will be matched with more than £100 million of other funding (mostly European) to create local walking and cycling networks benefiting an estimated 6 million people through 79 projects across the UK.

RB asked how Route 43 was progressing and was told that Powys County Council (PCC) had started on the first section near Ystradgynlais. Land negotiations are in progress, and these need to progress further before funding can be sought.

When asked how the LAF members could assist, RJ suggested a letter lending weight to Sustrans and their projects. Letters should be sent to The Trunk Road Agency and the Director of Sustrans, Cymru.

JE thanked RJ and said Members were grateful for such an informative talk.

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is attached to these minutes.

***Action point: JE to write a letter in support of Sustrans to be sent to The Trunk Road Agency and the Director of Sustrans, Cymru.***

### **3 (8). Bus Services**

AL explained that the project she is working on is partly funded by the Sustainable Development Fund and she is investigating how visitors get to and around the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP). There has been substantial investment over the past few years such as concessionary passes and low level buses which have encouraged the public to use the bus service.

At present she is concentrating her efforts on producing an all Park bus timetable (including weekdays as well as weekends), a what to do guide using public transport with a suggested itinerary, and building pages on the BBNPA's website that provide information on public transport with a view to a standalone website. Future plans include the production of three booklets (one a year) on walks that can be co-ordinated with public transport, and how cyclists can be better accommodated on buses. AL hopes to build on the success of the Beacons Bus and is planning a feasibility study to extend this service further into the west of the Park. She hopes to develop links with the private sector and suggests that staff could have training to develop their local knowledge. In 2008 a shuttle bus was organised from Hereford train station to the Hay Festival and she suggested that this type of service could be used for other festivals in the area.

Finally she described how she was working with PCC to share data to establish the most popular routes and who is using public transport.

RS wanted to know whether the BBNPA is consulted when bus timetables are cut, to which AL said she would make a request for this to happen.

A copy of AL's PowerPoint presentation is attached to these minutes.

#### **4 (9). Hay Festival, 2009**

HLJ reported that Hay Festival was happy for the LAF to hold their meeting as part of the Festival, but that she must liaise with Richard Tyler, the Sustainable Tourism manager at the BBNPA. HLJ confirmed there would be no charge.

Members discussed in what form their presence should be. It was finally decided that the LAF recommend that the BBNPA have a presence there and the LAF could support them in a joint effort.

*Action point: JC to liaise with Maggie Robertson of Hay Festival and with Richard Tyler and then liaise with HLJ and report back to the other members at the March 2009 meeting.*

#### **5 (10). Disabled Access**

JE had not received a reply to the letter that he sent to the WAG Planning Department on 22 October 2008.

#### **6 (11). Fences on Access Land - Update**

JE produced a copy of the decision letter from the WAG regarding the fence on Manor Mawr/Penderyn Common. The WAG had decided that the fence should be removed. RB stated that the BBNPA were submitting a fresh application for the retention of the fence and it was to remain *in situ* for the time being. RB and JC explained that the BBNPA were in discussions with previous objectors.

It was suggested that Paul Sinnadurai, the Park's senior ecologist, give a presentation at the next meeting on the potential benefits of using fencing to control stock on certain habitats to improve environmental management.

DM suggested an extraordinary meeting to concentrate entirely on fencing. RB suggested a site visit in the summer to Hatterall Hill to inspect the erosion that has occurred there.

*Action point: Paul Sinnadurai to be invited to give a presentation regarding fencing on open access land.*

#### **7 (14). Lost Ways: Bridleway, Blaen y Cwm, Cwmdu**

HLJ explained that she had encountered opposition to the use of a route past Blaen-y-cwm-isaf, Cwmdu, when carrying out a walk with a television crew. She understood from information given her by EJ that there was a gap in the public network of approximately 50 meters between the road leading up to and the bridleway leading away from the dwelling to Blaen-y-cwm-uchaf. HLJ believed that the route was a 'lost way' and as it forms part of the Beacons Way, investigations should be made into the deeds of both properties to establish whether a right existed. EJ said he had not received complaints from anyone regarding the use of the route, and he considered it would be difficult to establish from the deeds, even if they could be obtained, what rights existed. He added the owners of the property had agreed to the Beacons Way going past their house when the route was established. After discussion it was agreed that EJ would ask the area warden to visit the owner of the dwelling and establish any issues from that particular day.

JE said that he intended to make a site visit to see the situation for himself and asked EJ to send him the maps showing the existing rights which had been sent to HLJ.

**Action Point:** *EJ to ask area warden to visit the owners of Blaen-y-cwm-isaf to establish any problems that exist.*

**Action Point:** *EJ to forward to JE maps showing the existing rights which had been sent to HLJ.*

## **8 (12). Rights of Way Orders**

### **8.1** Footpaths 1, 6 + 7 Community of Crai

EJ had received some objections to this diversion and intended to make a further site visit in order to reconsider the route.

### **8.2** Footpath 55 Community of Talybont

No objections to this diversion had been received and it would be presented to the PAROW committee in the New Year.

### **8.3** Footpath 42 Community of Tawe Uchaf

EJ had not received any adverse comments to date, but was waiting for observations from GD who had intended to visit the site during the last week of November. The closing date for comments on the consultation is 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008.

### **8.4** Footpath 146 Community of Crucorney

EJ has revisited the site, but there are problems with the mapping of the diversion since the completion of the building works.

### **8.5** Restricted Byway 6 Community of Llantilio Pertholey

JE explained that the owners of Pentre Farm had made a previous application for a diversion of the then Road Used as a Public Path (RUPP) to the magistrates Court and it had been refused. They have made a new application to the BBNPA under new legislation for the Restricted Byway (RB) to be diverted but the PAROW meeting of November 11<sup>th</sup> 2008 refused this against the officer's recommendations.

### **8.6** Footpath 11 Community of Talgarth

MSA informed the meeting that three members had visited the site with the area warden, Howard Morgan, earlier in the week. He circulated a map suggesting an alternative to the originally proposed diversion. This alternative would have two advantages:-

1. Two thirds of the route was in open field, not on a road used by large lorries, which would add to the enjoyment of the use of the route.
2. The route enabled walkers to see the historic buildings of Great Porthamel House, the Tower, and the Barn, which are mentioned in Pevsner as being of historic importance.

EJ accepted the alternative suggestion and said that he would need to talk to the landowner before agreeing the route.

**Action point:** *The LAF advised the BBNPA to consider an alternative route for the diversion other than the one presented in the consultation, as it had advantages which would benefit the user.*

## **9 (7). NP Management Plan**

This item was carried forward to the next meeting.

## 10 (6). Public Toilet Closures

JE introduced this subject describing how a charity had taken over the running of public toilets in the Elan Valley. HLJ stated there had been a thousand petitioners to keep Cwmdu toilets open. RB and JC commented that times are hard and there is a need to look for sustainable or alternative solutions to this problem. Some form of financial recompense to the private sector was suggested.

MSA suggested that RB write to PCC asking how many public toilets there are in the BBNP, how many have disabled facilities, how many are closed over the winter period, how many toilets have been closed already, and how many are at risk of closing. He proposed that the information gathered could identify the important sites that need to be kept open. JC put forward that PCC be invited to speak at a LAF meeting using the above as the basis of the talk.

***Action point: RB to write to PCC asking how many public toilets there are in the BBNP, how many have disabled facilities, how many are closed over the winter period, how many toilets have been closed already, and how many are at risk of closing. RB to write to PCC inviting them to speak on the closures of public toilets in the BBNP.***

## 11 (15). Finance

HLJ informed the members that she thought LAF's in England were better funded than those in Wales and seek outside funding for projects. RB informed her that the regulations for English LAF's were different to those in Wales. Geoff Williams of Carmarthenshire LAF advised her to research this matter on the internet, suggesting that she look for a conference held at Losehill Hall, Peak District.

RB requested that all members submit their expense claim forms by the following meeting at the latest, otherwise they will be forfeited. It was noted that the claim form states a claim should be a minimum of £20. RB said that the forms would be changed and to ignore the minimum figure.

***Action Point: Expenses claim forms to have £20 minimum claim removed. Members to submit claims before 5 March 2009.***

## 12 (5). Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) Funding

EJ produced a table summarising the projects to which money had been allocated under the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) funding scheme. MSA observed that a large chunk had been allocated to three bridges which diminished the funding for hundreds of miles rights of way. He felt that major bridge expenditure should be sought from the private sector or sponsorship from communities who find the bridge vital. He considered that the bulk of the WAG money should be ring fenced for essential maintenance. HLJ pointed out that sponsorship was difficult to find and time consuming.

JC explained that projects for the ROWIP funding had been found quickly as the money had to be spent, and that 10% was raised from other sources. He added that the money had to be used on implementing the ROWIP (*i.e.* improvement) and that maintenance had to be funded from other sources.

EJ said that the table was a means of accounting for the Authority's spending and was a tracking document of the progress of the expenditure. He gave a breakdown of the allocation of funds in general which was:-

- £12,000 for Upland Erosion,

- £6,000 for Data management
- the rest divided equally between the Eastern and Western Areas.

He said that projects for the second and third years of the funding were now being considered and that some bridges would be included as they would otherwise not have sufficient funds.

JC added that the Authority was looking at sponsorship in general and that the ROWIP funding offered opportunities for employment of contractors, and the development of countryside skills. The Army had volunteered their help with some of the bridges and had agreed to work more with the Authority in the future.

### **13 (2). Confirmation of Minutes from the Meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

The following changes were made to the unconfirmed minutes:-

In section 5, paragraph 3, line 11, the sentence 'This means that planning officers are powerless to challenge or reject an Access Statement' was added.

At the end of paragraph 3, section 5 the following was added – 'RS said that the LAF should be concerned because pedestrian access to new housing developments often involves the creation of new ROW. In Crucorney there is currently a live planning application for a residential development where the only proposed disabled access to the whole site is a new footpath – a new public ROW across a field – but this path does not comply with disabled access standards.'

The action point to section 2 was replaced with, 'A letter to be sent to WAG expressing serious concerns that Access Statements are not working within the planning system as WAG intended, in particular developers are not following the principles of "inclusive design", and planning officers seem powerless to change or reject inadequate Access Statements. This is particularly detrimental to upholding access standards.'

In section 3.6, line 4, Unclassified County Road was added.

In section 3.7, MS was replaced with Michael Smith.

In section 3.7, line 2, 'in Ceredigion' was added after 'lambing field'.

In section 8, line 3, 'JC preferred for individuals to obtain external funding' was replaced by 'JC had explained that if one person does all the fund raising that person develops networks and then if that person leaves; the Park is left without the contacts it needs. JC prefers to have a team of people, all of whom have specific remits for fund raising so the knowledge is shared and therefore kept in the Park'.

In section 8, paragraph 2, line 2, after 'in the local press', 'because dates can be seen on the website' was added.

In section 8, paragraph 4, line 17, 'Council' was changed to 'Councils' twice and RA was altered to 'the Ramblers Association'.

In section 13.2, the following was added at the end, 'GG informed the meeting that the bridge would enable Talgarth to have a Three Towers Walk - Bronllys Castle, Porthamel and The Tower in the centre of Talgarth.'

In section 13.4, 'were near rivers' was replaced with 'are in water courses'.

The whole of Section 13.5 was replaced with, 'RS reported that the bus service between Abergavenny and Hereford had been cut by half by Monmouthshire County Council from 1<sup>st</sup> September, without any consultation of the town and community councils along the route. Service is now only every two hours, and of the 14 stops on the route in Crucorney Community, only three have timetables, which makes it very difficult for residents and visitors to use the service. The service reduction is of additional concern because of the number of tourists staying in the camping and caravan sites along the A465, and because in Crucorney the bus route connects with three long distance paths: Offa's Dyke, the Marches Way, and the Beacons Way. RS asked whether BBNPA transport or tourism officers were consulted when bus services were reduced in the Park area, and suggested

that if not, BBNPA should insist on this role. It was agreed that this item would be further discussed at the next LAF meeting when a BBNPA sustainable transport officer would be present.'

The minutes were then accepted and it was agreed they would be signed as a true record once they were retyped.

#### **14 (3). Matters Arising Not Otherwise Appearing on the Agenda**

##### **14.1 Governance (Statutory duties *etc.*)**

The importance of accurate minutes having been confirmed under 13(2), it was not necessary to discuss this item.

##### **14.2 Talybont Reservoir SSSI**

JC informed members that there is a proposal for Talybont Reservoir to become a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

##### **14.3 Off-Road Motor Vehicles**

JC has been in discussion with the Army who are keen to assist the Park with the problem of illegal off-roading. It is envisaged that soldiers will be used for reconnaissance. It was reported that there is now a form on the BBNPA website that people can use to report sightings and this information is then passed on to the police. BBNPA have developed good relations with the police and are in discussions as to how to take things forwards. JC reported disappointment that recent prosecutions have not yet been pursued by the Crown Prosecution Service.

##### **14.4 Exclusion Order (Ceredigion)**

The Planning Inspectorate decision was supplied to members.

##### **14.5 Water-Related Recreation**

It was reported that the BBNPA's application to the Splash Fund had been returned requesting further information. It is at present being prepared for re-submission. PB expressed a wish to work with the BBNPA on this project and asked for a copy of the application.

***Action Point: RB to e-mail a copy of the Splash Fund application to PB.***

##### **14.6 NAFW National Representative**

Geoff Williams of Carmarthenshire LAF is standing in as Deputy National Representative for NAFW until an appointment is made in the spring of 2009, after new LAF's have been appointed in other parts of Wales. He is liaising between LAF's in Wales, WAG and CCW.

##### **14.7 NAFW Visit to BBNP**

JE and MSA informed members that RB organized a successful programme with visits to Sgwd yr Eira, The Gap Road, and Llangorse Rope Centre

#### **15 (13).Footbridge Over River Llynfi**

JE reported that on the site visit to where the bridge had once stood there was no sign of it remaining. It was noted there was a ford some way downstream that may be a suitable site for its replacement. GG recounted the time when the bridge had been washed away. MSA suggested that any funding procured from any Section 106 planning agreement relating to the anaerobic digester should be spent on the improvement of the listed buildings at Porthamal rather than on a new bridge.

**16. Dates for Future Meetings**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2009, at The Mountain Centre, Libanus, starting at 2 pm.

**17. Recreation and Responsibility in the Countryside and Coast**

JE reported that this event organised by the three Welsh National Parks, had been very successful. More than 120 people attended.

**18. Any Other Business**

18.1 Geopark

JE enquired whether the LAF should improve links with the Geopark as it covers roughly half of the Park but JC suggested not.

18.2 Recreation and Local Access Newsletter

JE showed the members a newsletter produced by CCW entitled Recreation and Access Newsletter, which can be downloaded from their website -

<http://www.ccw.gov.uk/enjoying-the-country.aspx> - follow a link at the bottom of the page under Further Reading. MSA requested a hard copy.

***Action point: A hard copy of Recreation and Access Newsletter to be sent to MSA.***

18.3 Traffic Free Routes

GG noted that there was lots of water on the Sarn Helen Road from Forest Lodge. EJ said that some of next year's ROWIP budget would be spent on drainage there.

18.4 Quarrying on Llangynidr Mountain

DM expressed concerns regarding Blaenonneu Quarry, Llangynidr Mountain. A notice has been served by BBNPA to prohibit the resumption of quarrying. The quarry operators have appealed. DM was worried that if they win their appeal the workings may encroach on a further 30 hectares of common land that has Rights of Access and is walked regularly. DM asked if he could have further information on the subject. The LAF was advised to liaise with Ruth Brown at the BBNPA by letter. JE felt that the LAF should write a letter in support of BBNPA to prohibit the resumption quarrying at Blaenonneu Quarry, Llangynidr Mountain.

***Action Point: JE to contact Ruth Brown, BBNPA, asking for information regarding quarrying on Llangynidr Mountain.***

***Action point: JE to write a letter in support of BBNPA prohibiting the resumption of quarrying at Blaen Onneu.***

18.5 Payphone Closures

RS noted that some payphones were being closed in the countryside. He was concerned that some of these are in areas where there is no mobile phone signal.

The meeting closed at 17.40.