

BBNP LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**Confirmed Minutes of the 2nd Meeting held
at 4.00pm on Wednesday 21st May, 2008
at the National Park Visitor Centre (Mountain Centre), Libanus**

Present

Secretary and Chairman :- Richard Ball

Jeremy Atkinson (JA)
Pam Bell (PB)
Neil Bennett (NB)
John Cook (JC)
John Evans (JE)
Gwyn Gwillim (GG)
Helen Lloyd Jones (HLJ)
David Mantle (DM)
Mike Scott-Archer (MSA)
Martin Skinner (MS)
Richard Stow (RS)

Observers:

Avril Barnes	Rights of Way Assistant, BBNPA
Eifion Jones	Rights of Way Officer, BBNPA
Michael Smith	Countryside Council for Wales
Geoffrey Williams	Carmarthenshire LAF Chairman

1. Welcome and Apologies

RB introduced members who had not attended the first meeting, and gave apologies from Colin Woodley and Graham Davies.

2. Election of Chairman and Deputy Chairman

Three members, JE, HLJ and MSA, gave five minute presentations each in their election bid for Chairman, after which all members voted in a secret ballot. The result was JE 5 votes, HLJ 4 votes and MSA 2 votes. JE was duly elected Chairman.

MSA withdrew from the election of Deputy Chairman and HLJ was unanimously elected unopposed.

JE took up the duties of Chairman at this point in the meeting and looked forward to working with all to make the Forum a success.

3. Receipt & Adoption of Minutes from the Meeting of 10th April 2008

RS pointed out that his name had been omitted from the list of members present, and he asked that paragraph 7 be changed to read *'RS said that Brad Welch's efforts and intentions with regard to community consultation were currently undermined by the BBNP*

Planning service'. The minutes were then accepted and signed as a true record.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of 10th April 2008

There were no matters arising from the minutes that were not included in the agenda.

5. Terms of Reference

RB led members through the Terms of Reference which had been circulated before the meeting. The only change, recommended by JE, was under paragraph 3a to delete the word 'new'.

HLJ requested that draft unconfirmed minutes be circulated for comment as soon as possible after the meeting.

The Terms of Reference were unanimously adopted.

6. Appointment of Observers and Community engagement.

RB made it clear that the WAG and CCW could send one person each to the LAF, the BBNPA could send as many as it wished, but other observers could be appointed by the Chairman. After discussion it was agreed that observers should be brought in as and when needed and invited to contribute early on in the agenda on specific topics. It was also agreed that minutes would be sent to FCW, Welsh Water (WW) and National Trust (NT) as a matter of course. Neighbouring LAFs would also be invited if relevant, and agendas of other LAF meetings would be circulated so that members could attend if necessary, but travel expenses would need to be authorised by RB.

Members discussed ways of making the general public more aware of the meetings. It was agreed that newspaper advertisements were unnecessary and expensive, but it was suggested that agendas be posted on the web site with a note welcoming members of the public and asking them to let the Secretary know if they wished to attend. RB also asked if members would be willing to put up notices locally in shops, centres and pubs advertising forthcoming meetings. It was agreed that BBNPA would investigate methods of notifying community council members of meeting and agendas by email.

7. Sgwd yr Eira Footpath

Elj reported that there was no significant change in the situation from the previous meeting. CCW continued to have reservations about the information provided by FCW, but they had met with the contractor who had conducted the botanical survey that day and the detail would be fed into the assessment. He was hoping for a decision in the next few weeks. Michael Smith of CCW commented that they had only received an updated application to do works in a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) last Friday from FCW which had not included a technical proposal.

HLJ expressed concern about the security of the site and safety for children. It was agreed that an unbiased letter be sent to both CCW and FCW, with a copy to the Community Council, requesting that the site be secured.

ACTION 2.1: Chairman to draft letter to FCW and CCW requesting security of the site.

8. Foot and Mouth Disease fences

RB showed members the positions of the two main fences which had been put up by DEFRA to prevent the spread of Foot and Mouth in 2001: (1) the Gap over the Beacons, and (2) Rhos Fach to Grwyne Fawr.

(1) He explained that Mathew Williams, the Rural Practice Surveyor for BBNPA, had met with Phil Park, the SE Wales Manager for the National Trust, and the graziers association the day before in order to act as mediator between the Graziers who

wanted to keep the fence and the National Trust who wished to remove it. The fence had already been relocated in the Gap area to avoid extensive erosion by walkers. Discussion about a conservation proposal is ongoing

- (2) The Black Mountain Graziers were due to hold a meeting on the following day which Natural England, CCW and BBNPA Staff would attend. Management issues would be raised but it was not clear whether the graziers would apply for consent to maintain the fence under Section 194 of the Law of Property Act 1925. GG said that the fence had been very useful to graziers. NB commented that the gates in the fence were difficult for horse riders and needed to comply with British Standards. HLJ felt that it would be unfair of the graziers to keep the fence without applying for consent from WAG, and JE said that although the LAF would not have any influence on the meeting, he felt that the public had not expected to still have the fences in place seven years after the Foot and Mouth problem.

9. Overview of resources available for improving Access

JC explained that the WAG had made £1.6 million available to those authorities in Wales who had produced a ROWIP (22 Local Authorities and one NPA, subject to ROWIPs being completed by Sept 08), for this year with an indication that this will continue for the next two years, separate from coastal access funding. The weighting formula for allocation of the funds took into account lengths of rights of way and population, and the original weighting resulted in BBNPA being offered £65-75,000. After discussion with the LAs and BBNPA, WAG had agreed to adjust the weighting on rights of way length, which resulted in £92,000 being offered to BBNPA. More money may be made available if some of the Authorities do not complete their ROWIPS by September. Other funding that will either be spent partly or entirely on rights of way work received by BBNPA amounted to £25,000 from constituent local authorities under the delegation agreement, £30-50,000 from the Aggregates Levy Fund for the Geopark, and £150,000 from the BBNPA revenue. JC asked for suggestions about how to lever additional funds from other sources. The following was suggested:-

- Pressure from the National Access Forum to the WAG to value the health of the nation and tourist income, which depends on walking (MSA)
- Corporate sources could be tapped, as in Redcar and Cleveland (JA)
- Appoint a fund raising/sponsorship officer who would be self financing (HLJ)
- Health department of WAG should be approached to set up small projects near centres of population (HLJ)
- Use of people with special needs to help with projects (DM)
- Bring all the National Parks together to emphasise the Park angle and to ensure continuity of trained people to carry out specialist tasks within the Park. (MSA)

JC agreed that there were opportunities with regard to obtaining sponsorship and with authorities along the Heads of the Valleys. He was particularly interested in getting communities involved and giving ownership to local people to ensure continuity and commitment. He was interested in the principle of account management which would involve various officers within the authority developing positive relationships with 'clients' without relying solely on one person's contacts.

Recommendation 2.1: The LAF strongly encourages the Authority to adopt a professional approach to fundraising for access issues.

JE asked that the LAF be kept informed of progress on this matter.

10. Change of Status of Talybont Reservoir SSSI

MSA informed the meeting that consideration was being given by CCW to denotify Talybont Reservoir from its SSSI status. The decision was based on the lack of threat to species which use it, e.g. goosander. The BBNPA had made a response. RB commented that SSSI status would not necessarily prevent access to water. The status simply meant that the owner would have to apply to notify CCW of a 'potentially damaging operation' (i.e. allowing paddle sports on the water) and CCW would make a decision as to whether or not to give consent. If the reservoir were denotified permission would still be required from the owner (WW).PB informed members that at present some canoeing does take place on Talybont Reservoir.

11. Papers from LAF National Representative

RB informed members of papers that had been forward by Clive Menzies, LAF representative on the National Access Forum, concerning meetings of the LAF Chairmen, as follows:-

- Report on NAF meeting on 23rd April
- Synopsis of LAF Chairs meeting
- Training module for new LAF members
- Job description for LAF National Representative and Deputy
- Communication strategy for LAFs
- Procedures for identifying National issues and subsequent action.

These would be made available to members if they required copies.

12. Electronically available planning application forms Eifion Jones

EIJ referred to the three planning application forms that were available on the BBNPA website. Two of those forms did not contain a question about the existence of a right of way on the application site and he said that there was an advantage to having such a question.

ACTION 2.2: The LAF to send a letter to the Head of Planning BBNPA, and to the WAG, with a copy to Clive Menzies, RA and the Open Spaces Society to advise the BBNPA and strongly encourage WAG to ensure that all planning application forms throughout Wales contain a question with reference to the presence of a public right of way on the application site.

13. Access to Inland Water

The meeting referred to the document entitled 'Water Related Recreation' which had been produced by Brighton University. JC said that he was on a working group, with the Environment Agency, CCW, WAG and others, to develop the action plan to implement the strategy which would be launched in early June. It was intended to use the strategy to acquire National and European money. RB said that WAG had indicated that £400,000 would be available for the whole of Wales this year to implement the access to water strategy, which it was thought would be allocated on a bid basis. MS asked if recreation and education authorities were represented on the group. MSA felt that the mention of Talybont reservoir as having potential for increased recreation was a matter of concern, particularly with the local community. He thought that other areas had greater, less damaging potential for increased use.

ACTION 2.3: JC would let MS know what representation was on the group. Copies of the document would be circulated to members as required.

14. Brecon Beacons National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

RB reported that there was nothing further to add to the previous meeting, except that Brad Welch encouraged comments on the plan during the consultation period which was due to end in August. The plan was available on the BBNPA web site. DM asked if commoners and community councils had been given copies, and was told that they had. JC asked members to contact Brad if they wanted a copy of the plan.

15. Proposed Business of Next Meeting

Items suggested for the next meeting were as follows:-

- The National Park Management Plan
- Review on the position with reference to the footpath behind Sgwd yr Eira
- Review of information regarding Foot and Mouth fencing
- Water related recreation strategy
- Brecknock Access Group – invite John Phillips, Chairman, to give a presentation
- National Cycle Network Manager for Wales, Ryland Jones to be invited to make a presentation about improvement of opportunities for cycling within the area.

16. Any Other Business

1. **Exclusion of public from lambing field:-** JE informed members of a case in Ceredigion, which was reported in the Western Mail, of a CCW decision not to exclude access to a lambing field, and which had been overruled by an inspector who said it should be allowed. Michael Smith informed members that the decision was more complex than the newspaper article implied. JE requested the decision letter be made available to the LAF.
2. **FC Woodland Grant:** JE requested information about the possibility of allowing permissive access on land that had been given a woodland grant. EIJ responded that the owner needed to be aware of the liabilities involved and that he could terminate the permission at any time.
3. **Vehicles off Road:-** MSA referred to several letters in the Brecon and Radnor Express about the right to drive vehicles off road, and to an article in the Times on 13th April about off-roaders banned from making green lanes into Byways Open to All Traffic. EIJ responded that the NERC Act now prevented this from happening so there was no precedent.
4. **Sub committees:-** MSA asked if the LAF had powers to appoint sub-committees for local issues between formal meetings. It was proposed that, as the guidance was silent on this subject, the Secretary and Chairman be empowered to appoint two other members as required. EIJ asked to whom he should send consultations regarding rights of way modification and diversion orders. It was agreed to send these to the Chairman who would then consult other members as necessary.
5. **List of members:-** HLJ and JE requested a list of members with their background, qualifications, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses to be circulated amongst members. It was agreed that no contact details would be shown on the web site.

Action 2.4: Secretary to make details available.

6. **Cambrian Mountains project:** JA brought to the attention of the LAF the project which was to promote sustainable use of the Cambrian Mountains by off-road vehicles. Maps of routes for use by motor vehicles had been marked up by the TRF and permissive routes through FC land were also being looked at. JA felt the outcome of the project could have a bearing on the situation in BBNP.
7. **Monnow Bridge:** RS reported that building work on the Monnow Bridge had now been put back to 2009 due to planning requirements and the narrow window allowed by the EA.
8. **Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum:** Geoff Williams was invited by the Chairman to inform the Forum about the proposed wind farm in the Amman valley that was due to go to Inquiry. It was thought that the proposed wind turbines would have an adverse effect on the landscape value of the National Park. Most members were not prepared to offer comments or objections to the proposal. The next meeting of the Carmarthenshire LAF would be held on 10th July.

17. Dates for Future Meetings

The date for the next meeting was changed from Wednesday 10th September, to **Thursday 18th September, to be held at Craig y nos Country Park, starting at 4 pm.**

The chairman thanked all observers for attending, and particularly for the contributions provided by Michael Smith, CCW, and Geoff Williams, Carms LAF.

The meeting was closed at 19.30.