

Local Access Forum

Annual Report

2009-2010



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BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT

Chairman's Foreword

During its second year, the Forum has seen changes in its membership. John Cook became acting Chief Executive of the National Park Authority (NPA) in September 2008, and was appointed Chief Executive in April 2009. His place on the Forum has been taken by the new Director of Countryside, Julian Atkins, who attended his first Forum Meeting in December. Richard Stow was appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government as a member of the NPA in April 2009, so ceased to be eligible for membership of the Forum. We shall miss John and Richard's contribution to our activities, and wish them both well in their new rôles. As new members, we have welcomed Michael Ash and David Thomas, who attended their first Forum Meeting in December, and are already making a useful contribution to the Forum's work.

During the year, the Forum has received two presentations on the draft National Park Management Plan, and we look forward to the Plan being approved by the NPA during 2010. We also look forward to seeing the draft management plan for the Waterfalls Area.

Water-related recreation is a topic of increasing interest, and will be promoted by the NPA Splash Officer, who gave an interesting presentation to our March Meeting.

Fences on common land, put up as a temporary measure during the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001, still remain in place, and the debate continues about whether they should be allowed to remain. The Forum has an important rôle to play in advising the NPA about matters like this.

The link between health and outdoor exercise is obvious, and we welcomed the Welsh Assembly Government's publication of 'Creating an Active Wales'. This supersedes 'Climbing Higher', published in 2005.

At the May 2009 Conference of Welsh Local Access Forums, all Chairmen were asked to identify one priority objective for the year. Mine is to raise the profile of Disabled Access issues. This is an increasingly important topic, and Local Access Forums must play an active part in advising their Appointing Authorities on improving facilities for less-able people. This is important throughout Wales, but especially in the three Welsh National Parks, and I look forward to working with the NPA – both officers and Members – to achieve this aim.

We need to establish closer links with the NPA's Planning Access and Rights of Way (PAROW) Committee. At present they merely receive copies of approved Minutes of Forum Meetings. Because of differing Meeting cycles, this means that the Minutes of our December Meeting will not be seen by PAROW members until the end of April, which is regrettable.

We also need to explore the question of what rôle should be played by the Forum in advising the NPA on planning matters. Should we be asked for advice not merely when a Public Right of Way crosses an application site, but also when the public's enjoyment of a right of way or its statutory right of access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 might be affected by a proposed development on nearby land?

These three topics will need full consideration by the Forum and the NPA in the coming year, and I look forward to these and other future challenges.

Introduction

The Local Access Forum (LAF) was established in April 2008 after the three former LAFs (Eastern, Western and Central areas) were amalgamated into one Forum. The Forum comprises 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 Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) 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

Advice Given by the Local Access Forum 2009 – 2010

National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

Bradley Welch, BBNPA NPMP Officer updated the Forum members throughout the year on consultations regarding the NPMP. He encouraged LAF members to engage in the consultation. A sub-committee was formed to undertake this task and a report was duly submitted.

Foot and Mouth Disease Fences

Discussions continued throughout the year regarding Foot and Mouth fences. The fences on Manor Mawr, the Gap over the Beacons and along the upper Grwyne Fawr in the Black Mountains were installed in 2001 when foot and mouth disease was prevalent in the area.

The BBNPA (on behalf of the Manor Mawr commoners) is in the process of submitting a second application to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to retain the fence on that common in order to assist with the Tir Gofal scheme. Ten stiles have been inserted along the fence line and graziers are working with the BBNPA on a vegetation control agreement. Members are generally supportive of this application.

Commoners have made an application for the retention of the fence near the Gap Road, but the National Trust has opposed it as required under its Act of Parliament. The members of the Forum were divided on the fence's retention, some in favour to encourage grazing and therefore assist with the common's management while others were opposed for aesthetic, access and enjoyment reasons.

Black Mountains SSSI

A sub-committee of the BBNP LAF made a site visit to view restoration work carried out by the BBNPA, on behalf of Natural England, on Hatterrall Hill. They were invited to participate in a consultation regarding a Commons Act 2006, section 38 application for consent to erect a temporary fence around the site. No objection to the fence was made by the LAF so long as gates or stiles were installed at appropriate places.

The fencing application has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Water Related Recreation

The Forum supported BBNPA's application for funding from the Environment Agency Splash Fund to improve water related recreation. This application was successful and the project is being implemented. So far two short circuits with wheelchair access and improvements to the waterside path have been made at Talybont Reservoir.

Other Matters Considered

Consultation on Public Rights of Way Orders

The Forum was informed at each meeting of current Rights of Way Orders.

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@breconbeacons.org

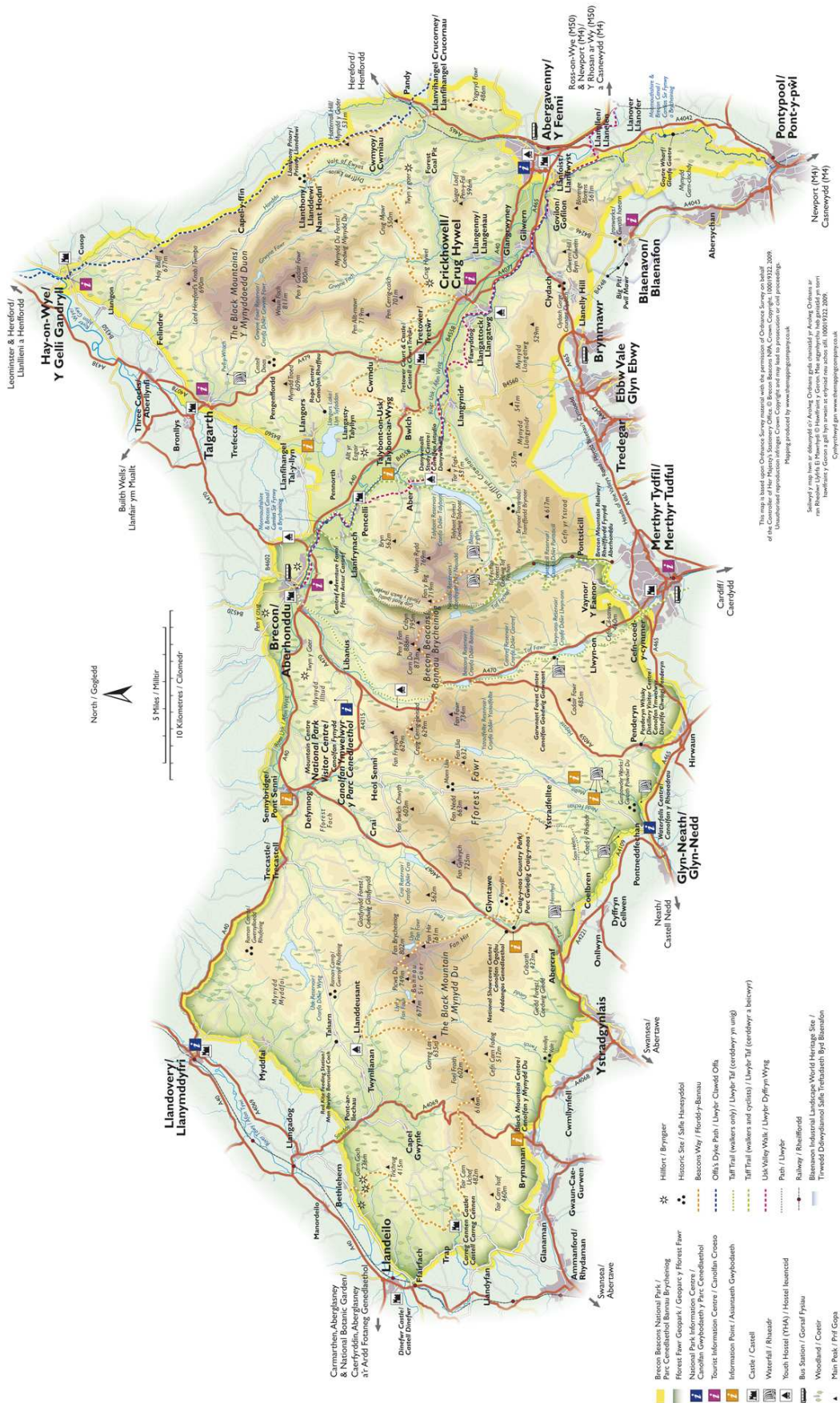
Secretary:

Richard Ball
Access Officer
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
Plas y Ffynnon
Cambrian Way
Brecon
Powys
LD3 7HP.

Tel. 01874 620464
Email. richard.ball@breconbeacons.org

APPENDIX II

Map



APPENDIX III

MEETING DETAILS

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

2009

20 May – BBNPA Headquarters, Brecon

10 September – BBNPA Headquarters, Brecon

10 December - BBNPA Headquarters, Brecon

2010

4 March - BBNPA Headquarters, Brecon

APPENDIX IV**MEMBERSHIP DETAILS**

Name	Date Appointed To LAF	Interests Represented
John Evans (Chairman)	April 2008	Retired solicitor and former member of Brecon Beacons NP Committee, Countryside Commission and Countryside Commission Committee for Wales. Chairman of the Elan Valley Trust. Member of CPRW, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Llanthony Valley and District Show Society, St John Council for Gwent and Brecon Beacons Park Society. Interests include hill walking, natural history and local history.
Helen Lloyd Jones (Deputy Chairman)	April 2008	Chair of Ramblers Cymru. Past council member of the Countryside Council for Wales and previously a community councillor in a semi-rural area. Chartered Engineer. Interests include rights of way and countryside matters as well as tourism, especially green tourism.
Graham Davies	April 2008	A native of the area with knowledge and experience of the natural history of the vicinity. Member of the Ystradgynlais Town Council, Chairperson of Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmtwrch and Chairperson of Ystradgynlais & District Access Group. Also a member of the Ramblers. Has served as a Brecknockshire Borough Councillor for many years. Has been instrumental in Definitive Map Modifications Orders (DMMO), creation orders, public inquiries and many other rights of way issues. Has been involved in the Ffordd y Glowyr Project and is still involved in the Dyffryn Henllys Project promoting local heritage and access to all.
Steve Rayner OBE	April 2008 Resigned December 2009	Member of Welsh Canoeing Association, British Mountaineering Council, Mynydd Illtyd Commoners' Association and involved in tourism through the Association of Bunkhouse Operators. Enjoys hill walking and canoeing in the National Park.
Mike Scott Archer	April 2008	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	April 2008	Farms in the Hepste valley. Conservation officer for the South Wales Caving Club. Member of the Dan Yr Ogof Cave Advisory Committee. Chair of the national governing body for caving; The Cambrian Caving Council. Secretary of the Penderyn Commoners Association & Vice-chair of the Penderyn branch of the FUW. Member of the Ystradfellte CC and of the Hirwaun & Penderyn CC. Interests include cave & mine exploration, underground access and industrial archaeology.
Jeremy Atkinson	April 2008	Freelance ROW, trails and river surveyor. Member of the National Access Forum, International Mountain Bike Assoc, Cycle Touring Club, Trail Riders Fellowship, Byways and Bridleways Trust, Hay Fishing Club and Hereford Nature Trust.

Gwyn Gwillim	April 2008	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.
Martin Skinner	April 2008	Head of an Outdoor Centre in Llangenny. The Centre introduces young people and adults to adventure activities and field studies within the Park. Executive member of the Assoc. of Heads of Outdoor Ed Centres, Outdoor Ed Advisors Panel member, member of Wales MLTB, British Mountaineering Council and Gwent Mountaineering Club. Enjoys spending time in the open countryside and mountains.
John Cook	April 2008 Resigned September 2009	Former Director of Countryside of the BBNPA and now Chief Executive
Julian Atkins	October 2009	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.
David Mantle	April 2008	Member of Llangynidr Community Council and Chairman of their Rights of Way Committee. Committee member of Duke of Beauforts 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 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.
Neil Bennett	April 2008	Member of the British Horse Society. Interests include equestrian rights of way, rider safety, sustainable equestrian tourism and rights of way maintenance and responsibilities.
Pamela Bell	April 2008	Member, of the Welsh Canoeing Association, elected to the Board of Directors in 1995 and has chaired 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.
Richard Stow	April 2008 Resigned August 2009	Retired Marketing Director. Deputy Chairman of Crucorney Community Council, responsible for the promotion of economic and social well-being of a community inside the Park. Active supporter of Sustrans as a volunteer Ranger for a 12 mile section of their National Route 42, which runs along the Llanthony valley up to Gospel Pass. Keen walker and cyclist.

David Thomas	December 2009	Member of the Tawe Uchaf Community Council and Ystradgynlais Access Group. An active walker for many years, familiar with the footpaths in the south of the National Park, with a special interest and knowledge of walks on the Carmarthen Fans. 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. Interested in local history, has a degree in Economic and Social History and Politics. Worked for 30 years in the food retail industry, retiring early in 2008 after 10 years as senior manager with a supermarket. Currently project manager on the Nant Llech Project, which is a joint venture between Tawe Uchaf Community Council and BBNPA.
Michael Ash	December 2009	He is interested in the development of Public Transport and walks for the less active. Also a member of Rhondda Cynon Taff LAF.

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).