

LAF Rationalisation

In the absence of the NP representative on the Forum, SR reiterated the point made at the previous meeting that it was important for the Area Managers to attend as observers when the single was established, especially if the Head of Countryside was unable to attend the meeting.

List of Streets and Unrecorded Rights of Way

This issue had been raised with the Welsh Assembly Government and a copy of the reply from Gerry Quarrell would be circulated.

4. LAF Rationalisation

RB informed members that a further report had been presented to the Planning, Access and Rights of Way Committee (PAROW), which was substantially the same as the previous report, with some amendments. The PAROW Committee agreed the recommendation that the BBNPA should form one Local Access Forum and the Authority would now need to consider the recruitment process, which was likely to start in January 2008, as the new single LAF would need to be in place on 1 April 2008. RB gave brief details of how the recruitment process would take place and quoted from the LAF Regulations which specified in detail what the Authority should consider when selecting members. He concluded by saying he hoped all members would apply to join the single LAF and that information would be sent out in the New Year. Members stressed the importance of ensuring that all three areas of the Park were represented on the new LAF.

5. Upland Erosion Strategy

RB informed members that he had received 12 responses to the consultation and that all responses had been positive and constructive. RB continued by saying that several officers of the BBNPA had recently met to look at CCW's grant criteria to see which BBNPA projects met those criteria. Following that meeting it was suggested that the main proposal would be to put together an application to CCW to grant fund the appointment of an external funding officer to develop a larger bid and the BBNPA would be meeting with CCW shortly. RB would need to see how this matter developed and then discuss the way forward with John Cook, the new Director of Countryside and Land Management.

6. Access to Inland Water

RB confirmed that information regarding the research into water related sport and recreation, and the workshops held earlier this year, was now available on the Brighton University website (www.brighton.ac.uk/waterrecreation). He informed members that the Minister, Jane Davidson AM, was of the opinion that Wales' water was an under-utilised resource and was keen to see this developed.

RB continued by saying that the Environment Agency were interviewing all local authorities and that he understood web cams were being installed on two pilot rivers, so that water levels could be viewed to allow paddlers to decide whether conditions were suitable for them to use the river. Also, research into recreational 'hubs' would take place as there were clearly opportunities for employment, etc. He added that the Environment Agency was funding a post

specifically to discuss and develop access agreements on the Rivers Wye and Usk. He said that Andy Schofield (Environment Agency) had emphasised the problem of trying to complete this work with a tight timescale. He had also informed RB that the Environment Agency might target specific activities in certain areas, such as white water in Snowdonia, lakes and reservoirs in the Brecon Beacons, coastal water in Pembrokeshire, etc. SR expressed concern at this suggestion and said it simply identified how little the Agency understood the amount of white water available locally and, in his opinion, this was better than that available in Snowdonia as it was more consistent.

SR added that, although webcams might be useful, in his opinion they added little to what was already available to paddlers and might be better targeted at the rapids rather than simply pointing them at water level gauges. He also highlighted that the positioning of the webcams was extremely important as, while the water levels in the Sennybridge area remained fairly static, there could be dramatic changes further along the river, such as at Llangynidr.

With regard to coastal access, RB informed members that he had attended a conference on Monday 1 October held by CCW concerning access opportunities in the countryside. Delegates had been informed that the Assembly were looking at introducing legislation similar to that proposed for England where there would be a strip of coastal land made available and this would move in line with any erosion. However, it had been stressed that legislation would only be used as a last resort and that the Assembly hoped access would be negotiated mainly via voluntary agreements. HLJ asked whether it was currently possible to walk the length of the River Usk in the National Park. RB replied that, although there was the Usk Valley Walk, this didn't necessarily follow the river. He added that he was aware of one particular instance where the public right of way had disappeared due to bank erosion and negotiations with the landowner to divert the path had been unsuccessful.

The Chairman highlighted that Mike Scott-Archer had suggested that the LAF should be represented on the WAG Water Related Sport and Recreation Strategy meetings. RB agreed to contact the Environment Agency but concluded by saying that, as the Strategy was due to be produced shortly, he felt that there would be few opportunities for input.

Action point: RB to contact the Environment Agency to request that the Forum be represented at the Water Related Sport and Recreation Strategy meetings.

7. Matters to be Referred to the National Access Forum

HLJ expressed concern at some of the proposals put forward in the workshop at the annual LAF conference regarding dogs in the countryside. RB explained that during the conference workshops were held and Clive Menzies, the Wales LAF representative, had asked delegates to highlight issues they wished to be addressed with the Assembly. Delegates were mainly LAF chairmen, deputy chairmen and LAF secretaries. A reply had been received from Gerry Quarrell and RB offered to provide a copy of this response. RB also offered to write to Clive Menzies highlighting HLJ's concern with at the comments.

Action point: RB to i) write to Clive Menzies highlighting HLJ's concern and ii) circulate a copy of Gerry Quarrell's letter in response to the issues raised regarding dogs in the countryside.

8. Proposed Business of Next Meeting

Lost Ways database – Mike Scott Archer

Members were asked to inform RB as soon as possible of any other agenda items.

9. Any Other Business

Planning Applications

In a letter to the Chairman, Mike Scott-Archer requested that a representative from the Forum should be nominated to check the Planning Register on a regular basis. Members nominated MSA to check and monitor the Planning Register.

Lost Ways

MSA suggested that the Forum should, in conjunction with Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, establish a database of lost ways. Members considered this suggestion but felt further clarification was needed regarding the purpose of the database. Members commented that priority should be given to established rights of way and that this was possibly not within the remit of the LAF. It was agreed that this matter would be raised at the next meeting.

12. Date of Next Meeting

23 January 2008 at 4.00pm – National Park Visitor Centre (Mountain Centre)