

Central Area Local Access Forum

Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23 January 2008 at 4.00pm - The National Park Office, Brecon

Present:

Chairman:

Colin Woodley (CW)

Secretary:

Richard Ball

Members:

Graham Davies (GD)

Kevin Dunster (KD)

Rodger Garratt (RG)

Helen Lloyd Jones (HLJ)

Steve Rayner (SR)

Rob Reith (RR)

Mike Scott-Archer (MSA)

John Wilks (JW)

Observers:

Dawn Fox

Access Assistant, BBNPA

Eifion Jones

Rights of Way Officer, BBNPA

Avril Barnes (part of meeting)

Rights of Way Assistant, BBNPA

John Cook (part of meeting)

Director of Countryside and Land Management, BBNPA

1. Introduction, Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Robin O'Brien, Alan Ward and Michael Smith (CCW). John Cook (BBNPA) apologised that he would only be able to attend part of the meeting. SR commented that there was once again no National Park representative present on the Forum. Chairman welcomed Graham Davies who had been appointed to the Forum.

2. Receipt & Adoption of Minutes from the Meeting of 3 October 2007

The minutes were adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the last meeting.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of 3 October 2007

Improving Liaison with Neighbouring LAFs

RB confirmed that every effort was being made to obtain the dates of adjoining LAF meetings but this was proving to be more difficult than anticipated.

Action point: RB to circulate the times and dates of adjoining LAF meetings as soon as possible.

Access to Inland Water

SR noted that the Wye and Usk Foundation website referred to agreements that existed for canoeists and said that it was unclear who these agreements were with as, to his knowledge, they had not been agreed with anyone representing canoeing interests. He was not sure if most canoeists would use these agreements as they had not been agreed on their behalf. (Note: at 25 January the Wye and Usk Foundation website referred to arrangements rather than agreements.)

4. Rights of Way Consultation – Christ College, Brecon

EJ apologised for inadvertently sending this consultation to all members when the Forum had previously agreed that MSA would respond to consultations on behalf of the Forum. He continued by saying that three members had responded to the consultation, two in support of the closure and one expressing reservations and for this reason members were now being asked how they wished the Forum to respond to the consultation.

GD highlighted reasons why he felt the Forum should not support the application and asked where this would end if this closure was allowed to go ahead, as there were other footpaths in the vicinity of the school that might also be at risk of closure. EJ reassured members that the conditions of the legislation were very strict and that it was unlikely that any of the other footpaths would satisfy those conditions even if an application was made. HLJ added that she was concerned that planning permission had been granted for a residential block on the line of the existing right of way and expressed the view that this should not have happened and that there was a need to ensure that this did not occur in the future. EJ pointed out that this occurred during the 1970s and the path was diverted around the new build at that time.

As opinions differed on how to proceed the Chairman asked members to vote by show of hands on this matter and the majority of members supported the application.

5. CCW Paper re Funding and ROWIPs

RB updated members on the current developments following the paper from CCW in November 2007, including funding for the development of the coastal path and additional funding from the Assembly for the implementation of ROWIPs. He added that the ROWIP funding was likely to occur for three years although this was only committed for 2008/09 at present. The total funding would be approx £1.5m during 2008-09 but the method of allocation had not been decided and RB noted that he understood this might be at least partly based on the length of rights of way and population per authority.

MSA stated that he had been through the document in some detail and had calculated various costs based on CCW's figures. MSA circulated a paper to members showing these calculations and highlighted that the proposed funding was actually only a very small percentage of what was required (based on CCW's estimates). Members agreed that, although the funding seemed generous at first glance, this was in fact a derisory amount.

GD said that it was essential that any funding was ring-fenced to ensure that it was not diverted to other areas of work and JW felt that the CCW paper did not take into account the amount of footpath work carried out by volunteers. SR asked if the National Park had a view on how any funding would be spent and RB replied that various projects were being developed and would be based on issues identified in the ROWIP.

JW noted that the CCW paper highlighted the need to publicise and promote rights of way. In his opinion, most users were informed by Ordnance Survey maps which, in turn, were based on the Definitive Map. He felt this was a worrying situation as the Definitive Map was known to be inaccurate and in need of attention.

Members agreed that these issues should be brought to the attention of the Welsh Assembly Government and, in particular Edwina Hart, the Minister for Health and Social Services.

Action point: RB to write to the Welsh Assembly Government on behalf of the Forum highlighting their concerns regarding the apparent disparity between the funding available and that actually needed for the implementation of ROWIPs.

6. LAF Recruitment

RB confirmed the timetable for recruitment and encouraged all members to re-apply.

7. Draft Strategic Plan for Water Related Recreation (WRR) in Wales

Members discussed the above plan and although they felt this had some good points, several concerns were raised. These included concerns at some of the specifics mentioned in the document, such as the areas identified as 'hubs' (Brecon was not included) and an apparent lack of empirical data. The point was also made that the wording of the consultation document made it very difficult to respond to some of the questions.

SR informed members that he was aware that the Welsh Canoeing Association now took the view that there were documents that suggest that there was some very old legislation giving a right of navigation on rivers to all boats however, since 1830, it had been assumed that navigation rights did not exist on most non-tidal rivers. SR added they he felt it was wrong for this Plan to go ahead without reference being made to the these older rights and HLJ agreed that this should be flagged up if the older law has never been overturned.

Members agreed that SR was the best person to respond to the consultation on behalf of the Forum and SR agreed to do this.

Action point: SR to respond to the Draft Strategic Plan for Water Related Recreation (WRR) in Wales on behalf of the Forum.

8. Matters to be Referred to the National Access Forum

None.

9. Any Other Business

Lost Ways

MSA asked that the Forum look at ways of recording lost ways to ensure that they are not forgotten. He felt that they were very important both historically and environmentally and often proved to be more useful than newer recorded routes. EJ made the point that all claims for lost ways must be properly submitted before the cut off date of 2026 or they would be lost and a database or list would not be sufficient.

JW made the point that some routes were not lost at all and might already be on old OS county series maps or on other OS maps as 'other routes with public access' but not on the Definitive Map. These routes would also be lost after 2026 because no rights were attributed to the List of Streets. JW added that this would have a large effect on recorded rights of way which might become cul-de-sacs due to the loss of the unrecorded routes.

Members agreed that the Forum should recommend that the new single LAF take this matter into consideration. They also felt that public awareness should be raised regarding the implications of the cut-off date

Expenses

RB asked members to submit any claims for expenses as soon as possible.

Members wished to record their thanks to the Chairman and RB for their work on behalf of the Forum and the Chairman added his thank to the BBNP staff that provided advice and assistance.