

Eastern Area Local Access Forum

Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting Held on 5 December 2007 at 10.00am Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre

Chairman:

John Evans

Secretary:

Richard Ball, Access Officer, BBNPA

Members:

Jeremy Atkinson (JA)

Jamie Ellson (JEll)

Sue Fair (SF)

Gwyn Gwillim (GG)

Anthony Mayell (AM)

Martin Skinner (MSk)

Alan Ward (AW)

Observers:

John Cook (JCook) – Director of Countryside and Land Management, BBNPA

Eifion Jones (EJ) – Rights of Way Officer, BBNPA

Dawn Fox (DF) - Access Assistant, BBNPA

Avril Barnes (AB) – Rights of Way Assistant, BBNPA

Mike Smith (MSm) - CCW

1. Introduction, Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were received from Jenny Cockitt, Judy Cox, Jan Morris and John Williams. The Chairman welcomed John Cook, the new Director of Countryside and Land Management for the BBNPA.

2. Receipt & Adoption of Minutes from the Meeting of 5 September 2007

MSk highlighted a discrepancy regarding his initials and, with this correction, 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 5 September 2007

Upland Erosion Strategy

RB informed members that one of his key work targets for next year would be to look at some of the recommendations in the Upland Erosion Strategy, subject to funding being available.

4. **Forgotten Landscapes Project.**

The Chairman introduced Steve Rogers (SR), Forgotten Landscapes Project Planning Officer, who gave an interesting presentation on this Heritage Lottery supported project.

Following the presentation, members asked what steps were being taken to deal with the illegal motorcycle activity currently taking place. AWW made the point that, since the land was owned by Torfaen CBC, they (Torfaen) should bring about enforcement action. JA added that the point had been made in the past that there was little point in pursuing the offenders unless an alternative legal site was available. SR explained that the illegal use of the land was in many cases being carried out by 'second generation' motorcyclists and that a shift in attitude needed to take place to stop this activity. He added that a young motorcyclist had made the point to him that a legal site would be of no use to him or other young riders because they were too young to ride on the road so wouldn't be able to get to a site outside the immediate locality. SR briefed members on the various options available to monitor and manage illegal use and noted that a dedicated telephone number would be provided by the Police to enable authorised individuals and groups to report illegal activity and receive proper attention from the Police.

MSk asked how widely, and at what level, contact had been made regarding the educational aspect of the project as he could envisage all sorts of opportunities for 'A' level and other students. SR replied that good education links had been established with various schools and colleges and agreed to discuss this further after the meeting in order to identify any other contacts.

The Chairman asked if the Forgotten Landscapes project could learn from the experience of the Geopark project and SR agreed that both projects could be run to complement each other, rather than compete. GG added that, in his experience, commoners would be happy to assist provided their rights were protected.

In conclusion, members expressed their total support for the project and strongly recommended that the new single LAF continued this support, once it was established.

5. **CCW Paper - Funding and ROWIPS**

RB informed members that the BBNPA and other local authorities in South Wales had attended a meeting last week at the National Assembly where they were informed that £1.5m of funding would be made available to the 23 authorities in Wales that were producing ROWIPs, to assist with the implementation of the actions identified. He understood that this was likely to be allocated using a funding formula, which might be based on the length of rights of way and population per authority. JCook added that the Assembly were still looking at developing the formula and would go out to consultation on their proposals.

Members expressed their misgivings at the information provided and considered that if authorities with larger populations were given more funding than those with low populations this would be unfair especially since authorities with low populations did not have the same potential

of raising revenue via council tax as those with a large population, but might be responsible for much greater lengths of rights of way.

The Chairman referred to correspondence between Judy Cox (on behalf of the BB Park Society) and the Welsh Assembly Government regarding the Society's concern at the lack of scheduled maintenance of rights of way in Wales. Some members felt that bracken was becoming a particular problem on rights of way, particularly on the Sugar Loaf and JA added that, in his opinion, some maintenance work needed to be timed quite specifically in order to be effective. Members felt it was unreasonable of the Assembly to expect continued improvement in the rights of way network unless adequate funding was available

Action point: DF to circulate copies of the correspondence to members.

Recommendation to the National Park Authority

The Eastern Area Local Access Forum recommends that the BBNPA should take every possible step to ensure that they are adequately resourced to carry out the maintenance of rights of way in line with the ROWIP.

6. Access to Inland Water

RB noted that the report would be delayed so would be brought to a future meeting.

7. Matters to be Referred to the National Access Forum

Funding – members expressed the view that funding for ROWIPs should be provided to fill gaps, not supplement an already unfair system and wished this matter to be raised at the NAF.

The issue of Lost Ways was also raised and members felt that issue should not be forgotten.

8. Proposed Business of Next Meeting

Upland Erosion Strategy
Water Related Recreation
Funding for ROWIPs

RB encouraged members to put forward ideas for future agenda items in addition to those suggested by the NPA.

9. Any Other Business

Members raised queries regarding disabled representation, the status of a UCR and the Monnow bridge, all of which were answered by the officers present.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 20 February 2008 – 10am. Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre.