

# BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

## EASTERN AREA ADVISORY FORUM

### MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday 9 October 2007 at St Michael's Centre, Abergavenny

Present

Cllr Mrs K Silk (Chairman)	Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP)
Cllr A Breeze	BBNP
Cllr Mrs M Morris	BBNP
Mr P Seaman	BBNP
Mrs M Underwood	BBNP
Ms A M Oakley	BBNP
Mr J Cook	BBNP
Mr A Ward	BBNP
Mrs J Gruffydd	BBNP
Mr S France	Cambrian Caving Council
Mr R White	Brecon Beacons Park Society
Mr P Dancey	SE Wales Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club
Ms J Poole	Countryside Council for Wales
Cllr P Games	Crickhowell Town Council
Mr B Burson	AHOEC
Mr C Passmore	NFU Cymru
Cllr J Prosser	Abergavenny Town Council
Mr R W Martin	Talgarth Town Council

#### I. Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting and introduced John Cook, newly appointed Director of Countryside and Land Management, who would be the lead officer for the Western Area Advisory Forum. Members of the forum also introduced themselves.

**Apologies** were received from:

Mrs M Taylor (Chairman BBNP)  
Cllr K Pathak (Deputy Chairman, BBNP)  
Mrs J Charlton (BBNP)  
Cllr W Powell (BBNP)  
Cllr T Huish (Blaenavon Town Council)  
Cllr A Fryer (Llangattock Community Council)  
Mr L Jones (Friends of the Earth)  
Mr N Maylon (Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust)  
Mr M Morgan (Menter a Busnes)

**Membership:** It was noted that the Bryn y Cwm Forum had expressed an interest in being represented on the Eastern Area Advisory Forum, but had not yet forwarded a

name. JG was asked to seek clarification as to whether this was the Bryn y Cwm Committee or Forum, as these were different bodies. **Action: JG**

AMO read out a letter from the Welsh Assembly Government in response to a request from the Chief Executive regarding the lack of WAG representation on the three Forums. The officer had indicated that as the forums were essentially dealing with local issues it was not felt appropriate for a WAG representative to attend all meetings. However, if a Wales wide issue was on the agenda for a future meeting they would be pleased to be invited. Members of the Forum expressed their disappointment at this response and asked AMO to convey this to the Assembly, and to stress that there was an open invitation for them to attend. **Action: AMO**

It was suggested that the two local Assembly Members should be invited to future meetings to hear what was being debated. It was agreed that a letter be sent to each of them advising them of the dates of meetings. **Action: JG**

MU and JP suggested that Adventa would be very useful members of the Forum, given their work on green tourism. This would be followed up. **Action: JG**

**Minutes:** the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2007 were agreed.

#### **Matters Arising:**

Felindre to Tirley Natural Gas Pipeline: The Authority continues to closely monitor the effects of the Natural Gas pipeline. The Murphy section of the pipeline is all but complete and the Nacap Land and Marine section is nearing mechanical completion within the next three weeks. There are three remaining affected locations within the National Park to be reinstated (RDX44WI, RDX48WI & RDX49WI) and these were likely to be completed within the next two weeks, weather permitting. The Reinstatement Procedures for RDX49WI and RDX44WI have been approved by BBNPA.

CCW had written to the DTi following prompting from the Authority, advising that they can no longer conclude that there will be no adverse affects on the three SAC rivers within the Park. Currently, BBNPA had no direct role in this issue but continued to apply pressure to both CCW and the Environment Agency to ensure best practice was applied wherever possible.

A meeting had been called between the DTi, NG, BBNPA and CCW within the next two weeks to formulate arrangements for aftercare of the affected area.

Ruts on Mynydd Myddfai and Archaeology – an update review was completed on the 26<sup>th</sup> September by National Grid/NLMJV and various levels of re-vegetation/recovery had been noted. The results of the review were to be provided as revised proposals to be submitted to BBNPA and Cambria Archaeology prior to a site meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> October. It was unlikely that any significant reinstatement work would be completed this year.

Roman Road Discovery – NG accepted that communication with the BBNPA could have been better on this matter – despite repeated requests for information it had not been forthcoming – NG/NLMJV would be liaising with Richard Field (Community Councillor for Aberyscir) regarding the production of a video and leaflet which would also be made available to BBNPA as an educational resource. General archaeological archive and

reporting - Schedule to be provided by NG and reporting would be compiled over the next 2 – 4 years.

Members asked whether National Grid had carried out a risk assessment of the whole pipeline, not only in light of the recent accident in Milford Haven, but also in relation to potential terrorist activity. The Chairman responded that while this had not been an issue for the Authority she knew that it was a concern for many people.

RW asked what was happening with the trust fund, which he hoped was not being hampered by legal issues. AMO would check with a colleague and circulate a written note to the Forum members. **Action: AMO**

ROWIP: RW commented that he was pleased his comments made at the last meeting had been passed on. He asked when they might expect the plan to be published. AMO would check this and report back to RW. **Action: AMO**

## 2. Area Manager's Report

AW introduced himself as the new Area Manager of the Eastern Area following the restructuring of the warden service and wardening areas. He welcomed the opportunity to work in the east of the Park, having started his wardening career in this area before moving to the central area of the Park.

He highlighted the work being done in the eastern area, in particular Hatterrall Hill and the World Heritage Site.

JP referred to work that Adventa was doing on guided walks initiatives and felt that they could learn from the Park. He asked about Abergavenny Tourist Information Centre and AW advised him that the Authority now ran this for Monmouthshire, and were able to have a permanent base for the wardens in the east.

Concerns were expressed over the effect of raves held in the Grwyne Fawr forest. AW confirmed that the Forestry Commission were the landowners, and that the police could only act if they had advance notice of such events and could block the road. Once events had started there was little they could do. Long term campers were also a problem in the area, and AW suggested that any concerns be forwarded to Mansel Jones who was the Forestry Commission's Area Manager, and a member of this forum. He would let BB have a contact email address. **Action: AW**

There was some discussion about illegal off road vehicular activity and AW advised that the Authority was still awaiting advice from Powys County Council on this, as the body responsible for all rights of way. MU advised that WAG had issued advice to CCW and all local authorities on combating off roading, and PS said that similar guidance had been issued in England. AMO would raise this at the next Powys/BBNP liaison meeting in November. **Action: AMO**

RW added that the Park Society were happy to help in reporting any incidents.

MU advised that obtaining an incident number from the police would ensure that it appeared on the crime statistics – an increase might encourage more action from the police. CP pointed out that in most cases the problem was just being moved around, and that a separate dedicated site outside the Park should be found.

JP said that they should keep a watching brief on how the legislation was working in England. PS advised that the Council for National Parks were very good at disseminating examples of good practice. **Action: JG**

AW outlined the teams areas of responsibility and this can be seen below.

<b>Warden</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>
Alan Ward - Area Manager (East)	Based in Plas y Ffynnon, Brecon	Mobile tel. 07854 – 997 505
Clive Williams - Area Warden		Mobile tel. 07854 – 997515
AAW Sam Ridge	Vaynor, Talybont, Llangynidr, Llangattock, Crickhowell	Mobile tel. 07854 - 997507
AAW Howard Morgan	Llangors, Llanfihangel Cwmdu, Talgarth, Gwernyfed	Mobile tel. 07854 - 997514
AAW Shelly Baars	Hay, Llanigon, Vale of Grwyne, Ll Crucorney	Mobile tel. 07854 - 997509
AAW Steve Smith	Grosmont, Ll Pertholey, Llanelly, Llanfoist Fawr, Brynmawr, Llanover, Goetre Fawr, Pontypool	Mobile tel. 07854 – 997536
Ian Penn Car Park Watch Volunteer Coordinator		Mobile tel. 07854 – 997538

### 3. Archaeological Priorities

An alternative paper was tabled as the wrong one had been sent out with the agenda. The tabled paper had been prepared by Peter Seaman as a discussion paper for the Future Directions Forum of the Authority. It would now be considered by the Authority when it reviewed its corporate objectives and budget for the next year. **Action: AMO**

PS pointed out that the paper dealt with the wider issue of cultural heritage, and he hoped that a workshop could be held to include not only the agencies and specialist bodies, but also the 'skilled amateurs' such as local history societies and U3A. The Chairman commented that this was a useful paper which raised the profile of cultural heritage and highlighted the fact that the Authority had not been fulfilling its obligations in this area. CP felt that cultural heritage would become increasingly important in rural areas as a way of sustaining farming income. He advised that it was necessary to keep a watching brief on the Rural Development Plan to ensure it was different in the National Park.

PS advised that there was a study carried out in Gloucester University, on the economic benefits of cultural heritage, with potential grant aid to support work. It was agreed that he would make contact with the university on this. **Action: PS**

JP said that the National Park should be the policemen of the landscape, with a strategy on the cultural heritage. They should be a co-ordinator and facilitator and know what was going on. MU felt that a good mapping exercise was an essential first step, so that the Park knew what it had.

#### **4. Unitary Development Plan/Affordable Rural Housing**

Members received a short briefing note about the status of the Unitary Development Plan and the Authority's policies in relation to affordable rural housing. AMO advised that the Authority was co-funding the post of Affordable Housing Officer (Terry Flynn) who was working with the Park 1½ days per week.

PS expressed concern that the Rural Housing Enabler had now left his post with Powys, and hoped that he would be replaced. RM seconded this, and AMO agreed to raise this at the liaison meeting with Powys in November. **Action: AMO**

Members of the Forum were supportive of the Park's policies to encourage more affordable housing.

#### **5. ASPIRE Project**

Members received a project description for a bid being made under the Intereg 4B funding programme. This was a five year major project underpinning all the work that the Authority was currently doing with sustainable tourism and the Geopark designation. A decision would hopefully be received in January or February 2008. JC stressed that this was very aimed at practitioners, and would not just be workshops.

RW asked about elements such as erosion control or aspirational plans. AMO advised that the Authority was trying to move away from aspirational plans that could not be resourced, and she recognised that resources were an issue with the ROWIP.

MU suggested that a small grants programme was a good way of encouraging people as an alternative to large bids.

JP welcomed the ASPIRE bid but felt a bit nervous that there were other organisations trying to do the same kind of work – he wondered whether there should be some reference to these in the text. AMO stressed that partnership working was a high priority for the Authority.

#### **6. Risk Assessment and Review of Corporate Objectives 2008-12**

AMO reminded the Forum of the process that the Authority had to go through at this time of year, reviewing the risk assessment and the corporate objectives before the budgeting process started. The Chairman advised that comments from the three Area Advisory Forums were a recognised part of this process and highlighted issues that had been incorporated into previous corporate objectives.

RW asked that erosion control and ROWIP resourcing be incorporated into the Risk Assessment.

**Action: AMO**

SF made the point that this assessment bore little relation to the work being done on the ground, and that given that this was a special landscape, he felt there should be a 'bottom up' approach to this process. AMO assured him that all staff, including staff working 'on the ground' were encouraged to identify risks for inclusion into the assessment.

## **7. Engaging with Rural Communities/Review of Area Advisory Forums**

The Chairman explained that she wished to take these two agenda items together. It was noted that the communications survey which had been circulated at the beginning of the year had not been completed owing to the officer having been on sick leave and subsequently leaving the Authority. However, the following community initiatives were noted:

- Community meetings to share best practice in developing community sustainable development projects are being arranged for late mid/late November- one in the East, one in the West -dates to be confirmed.
- Invitations will be extended to BBNPA sponsored free screenings of An Inconvenient Truth (Brecon cinema 19 Nov 7.30 pm and 25 Nov 2.30pm)to raise awareness of climate change and seek informal expressions of interest in developing local responses for mitigation and adaptation.
- BBNPA participates in Community Strategy Partnerships- with limited time resources focusing on Powys & Monmouthshire. BBNPA is active in the Powys Regeneration Partnership and the Powys & Monmouthshire Environmental Partnerships- working to share best practice (eg on planning advice notes for renewable energy with Powys) and work collaboratively with other CS partners Powys CS is being revamped, including the linkage to and support of Local Community Forums. A meeting is about to take place with Powys Regeneration Manager to identify opportunities for collaborative working and for continued linkage with revised Local Community Forums.
- In autumn 2005 and winter 2006/7 BBNPA took National Park Management Plan (NPMP) consultations to community meetings, including some hosted by Local Community Forums (Bryn y Cwm, Crickhowell, Brecon, Tywi and Amman(Carms). Community feedback was input as part of stakeholder input to NPMP.

The Chairman asked for comments about how the Authority was engaging with rural communities, and in particular, whether the Area Advisory Forums were effective in their current format. The following comments were made:

- Meetings are during the day which is difficult for farmers and other self employed members;
- Not enough external representatives – too heavily weighted towards officers and members of the Authority;
- The Authority needed to listen carefully to what was said at the forums;
- Not enough staff on the ground (AMO reported that in the last ten years there had been an increase in the number of wardens);
- While the Authority tried to encourage agenda items from members of the forum, very few were actually received (apart from the Park Society);
- The former Access and Recreation Advisory Group (ARAG) better represented interest groups in the Park – current representatives had to sit through items in which they had little interest;
- Organisations were stretched to put a representative on all three forums, so missed the Park wide perspective by attending just one of the three forums;

- Need to motivate people to take some responsibility for living in the Park rather than expecting the Park (or the Council) to do everything – the example of Talgarth Regeneration was given where people were encouraged to get involved;
- The Authority might look after the Park but how does the lay person get involved? Raise a topic a month in the press eg. stiles/rights of way, promote some quick wins in an area;
- Make use of webcasts;
- National Park suggestion boxes outside the tourist information centres;
- How many people were aware of the existence of the volunteers and the excellent work they do?
- The Authority should go out and seek views, and attend meetings of member organisations on the Area Advisory Forums;
- Is there scope for bringing the three Forums back into one Park wide body, with a main forum and local representatives;
- Provide dedicated budgets for small area projects run by the Wardens and local people apply for small grants; (AMO and AW advised that Wardens had a budget for projects in their area, and kept a rolling list for when money became available);
- The formal structure of the forums is hindering the process - need to equally engage all partners and come up with a new model – perhaps with themed and facilitated workshops. To get a quality product the Authority needs to invest time and money – start with a clean sheet;
- Why have agendas – use open space technology;
- Need to keep our eye on WAG, who will be requiring all public bodies to ascertain citizens' views, and assessing the methodology;
- Essential that Town and Community Councils were involved in whatever model the Authority used, but the information was not always disseminated to the communities;
- Noted that AMO and the Community Development Officer were shortly to attend a conference on community engagement;
- If alternative methods of meeting were adopted, important to still have a Chairman or facilitator;
- Why not move to two forums to match the restructured warden service – this would reduce the pressure on organisations to attend three meetings;

The Chairman thanked all members for these very useful comments, which would be fed back to the Authority with comments from the Central and Western Forums.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

The Chairman asked members to note the date of the next meeting – 18 February 2008 - even though the model might possibly change over the next few months.

She asked for views on the venue, which was agreed to be excellent.

## **9. Any Other Business**

RM highlighted the Christmas fair to take place in Talgarth on 1 December, with a market event supported by the National Park from 10.00 – 4.30pm, plus the turning on of the Christmas lights at 6pm.

RW advised of the weekend of Park Society events – 18-20 April 2008.