



# Meeting Summary

<b>Title of Meeting:</b>	<b>National Access Forum (NAFW 61)</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	3 July 2018	<b>Venue:</b>	Welshpool Livestock Sales, Buttington Cross, Welshpool SY21 8SR
<b>Present:</b>	Ruth Hall (NRW, Chair), Howard Davies (NRW, incoming Chair) Carys Drew (NRW secretariat), Neil Buffery (BDS), Mark Weston (BHS), Elfyn Jones (BMC), Steve Rayner (Canoe Wales & WATO), Stuart France (Cambrian Caving Council), Kieron Foster (Cycling UK), Arthur Lee (Disabled Ramblers), Bernard Griffiths (FUW), Ceri Davies (Glandŵr Cymru), Ruth Rourke (IPROW), Duncan Green & Chris Tomley (Land Access and Recreation Association), Simon Patton (Mountain Training Cymru), Rachel Lewis-Davies (NFU Cymru), Beverley Penney (Open Spaces Society), Rebecca Brough (Ramblers Cymru), Gwyn Smith (Sustrans), Mark Stafford-Tolley (Welsh Local Government Association), John Watkins (WG), Sarah Smith (WG), Rowland Pittard (Youth Hostel Association)		
<b>Apologies:</b>	Rachel Evans (CA), David Evans (Elan Valley Trust), John Morgan (LAFs), Steven Morgan (Sport Wales), Kerry Thatcher – Visit Wales, Catherine Williams (WATO)		

Item No:	Item	Action
1.	<b>Welcome and Apologies.</b>	
	Ruth welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Ceri Davies from Glandŵr Cymru and Simon Patton from Mountain Training Cymru who were attending for the first time. Carys noted apologies and housekeeping matters. The secretariat had been advised that Max Grant who regularly represents Open Spaces Society had suffered a stroke and was currently in hospital. Forum members wanted to send their best wishes for his recovery.	
	<b>Action 61.1:</b> Carys will arrange for card to be sent to Max.	CD
	Carys noted that all of the actions from the last meeting had been completed she then provided an update on ongoing actions agreed at previous meetings.	

**Action 59.1:** Secretariat to liaise with Welsh Government to invite Hannah Blythyn AM, Minister for Environment to a future meeting

CD/WG

**In progress:** The secretariat will continue to liaise with WG officials and the Chair will invite the Minister to the November meeting. It was agreed that the provisional meeting date of 6<sup>th</sup> November may be changed in order to enable the Minister to attend.

**Action 59.2** Carys Drew to produce a briefing note including national timetable and local contacts, distribute the presentation.

**Progress: in progress** Carys had been focussed on developing NRW's way of working in this area and would move on to providing the briefing note and addressing the further information.

**Action 59.3:** Stuart France to present item about Caving at the next meeting

CD/SF

**Progress: Ongoing** The invitation to present at a future meeting remains open, Secretariat to liaise with Stuart to agree suitable time.

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2. **Welsh Government SMNR Consultation – government's response** John Watkins & Sarah Smith, WG.

The Forum members had significant interest in relation to the 2017 'Taking forward Sustainable Management of Natural Resources' consultation, notably Chapter 4 which was about recreational access to the outdoors.

The Minister has issued a [Written Statement](#) about the [summary of responses](#) to the consultation and the government's next steps.

John Watkins said that WG were grateful for all the responses received. The summary of responses was a step in the ongoing process, the consultation covered a number of areas and there had been a high response (17,391).

He reminded members of the background to the recent consultation, as WG had been developing views and seeking input from stakeholders about the current system for public access since 2014.

The next stage would be for the Government to issue its response and set out its intention and ambitions on the proposals in light of the consultation responses. There is a commitment to look at the issues and facilitate discussion, and to consider the timing of what could be brought forward and when it would be appropriate with regards to any legislation.

John gave an overview of the [Summary of Responses](#) (see page 44) in which issues are grouped into

- where there is consensus of views,

- where there are varying views and
- areas which are more controversial

WG staff are considering the feasibility of matters to inform the Government response. There is a continued commitment to work with forums like the National Access Forum. As it is a highly technical area, WG intend to pull the expertise together to inform how things progressed.

### Discussion points:

- Designated landscapes have a clear role in sustainable management of natural resources, with lots of challenges and experience, this is another area of the consultation of interest to Forum members. The Minister issued an [Oral Statement](#) on 13<sup>th</sup> March emphasising that all the existing designated landscapes will be retained and their purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty will not be weakened.
- WG are considering the consultation responses and bringing forward a solution that works best for Wales, trying to represent the broad interests and what is achievable.
- Geospatial information held by public bodies should be made available online and searchable as a requirement of European [Directive 2007/2/EC](#) is known as '[INSPIRE](#)'. It was noted that public bodies do make information available e.g. Welsh Government and NRW provide data on the [Lle portal](#). Duncan Green offered an item on the topic at a future meeting.
- WG are looking at the mechanics and resourcing of an electronic definitive map.
- The Defra health and harmony consultation about food, farming and the environment was England only, there would be a consultation in Wales on similar issues.
- *Post meeting note the Welsh Government Consultation [Brexit and our land: Securing the future of Welsh farming](#) is open until 30<sup>th</sup> October 2018.*
- There was a plea for clarity in relation to geological heritage and access for caving.
- Information gathered through responses to one consultation can be used to inform the Government's view in other relevant areas e.g. Brexit, Marine Strategy.
- The current WG position is as published in the consultation document, the next steps will be a decision for the Minister.
- Forum members were happy to help WG in taking forward next steps. It was noted that the responses from members had already been a big help.

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### 3. Sustrans Review of the National Cycle Network (NCN).

Gwyn Smith gave a presentation about the current review which Sustrans are leading of the National Cycle Network (NCN).

In terms of background, he noted that Sustrans, now 40 years old, had gone through major reforms in recent years including staff losses and that there had been a lot of consideration about what Sustrans' involvement in the NCN should be going forward.

The NCN started as a Sustrans-led Millennium Lottery project to provide a network of safe, traffic-free paths and quiet on-road cycling and walking routes and was a trailblazing scheme. Its 14,000 miles criss-cross the country, linking up villages, towns and cities. Sustrans promote rather than own the NCN.

The NCN has suffered in recent years from a lack of focus, development and consistency. Sustrans has therefore initiated a UK review along with a wide range of stakeholders to revitalise the Network. Gwyn shared the outcomes sought in order to find a long-term future for the NCN, the governance in place for the review and the three types of issues the review needed to address:

- setting out a vision and purpose for the NCN,
- the physical network itself and associated standards
- strategic enablers and addressing long standing issues.

An audit of the physical network had been carried out to inform the review and enable strategic priorities to be set.

Gwyn ran through a series of examples of demonstration projects that were planned to address strategic priorities between 2019-2023.

Whilst Wales is ahead due to the Active Travel Act, the easy projects had been delivered already as part of NCN developments and there are challenges ahead.

Further information about the review is available [online](#)

#### **Discussion points:**

- Concern that the NCN doesn't have a clear purpose, whether it is for transport/utility or recreation. In seeking to make improvements and create standards for surfacing, it is not necessarily right to create more tarmac in the outdoors.
- Use of the NCN has been studied through work by Lancaster University, use is steadily going up but there is a need to cater for users in context, 1/3 network is off-road with 70% of the use.

- Improvements for access for horse riding would be welcomed, consideration could be given to designation of routes as Bridleway to protect routes.

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#### 4. **Wales Coast Path (WCP) Promotion Projects 2018-2020**

Sioned Humphries

With support from WG and European funding, Sioned Humphries has been employed by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA) to undertake work for the ongoing promotion of the Wales Coast Path.

It is just over 6 years since the Wales Coast Path was opened, with a significant investment of Welsh Government and European monies for publicity and information e.g. the WCP website [[www.walescoastpath.gov.uk](http://www.walescoastpath.gov.uk)].

NRW and PCNPA with financial support from Visit Wales / Welsh Government have secured significant funding for the next 2 years to develop exciting new promotion projects, and also to refresh existing promotional activity, such the website. One of the new projects looks at using technology of augmented reality as a marketing tool to bring people to Wales and enrich people's experiences.

Political engagement and national participation are important elements. The WCP is an icon for Wales. A PR and advertising agency are being recruited to promote the WCP brand position. User and business surveys will be undertaken to monitor the effects of the activities and inform next steps.

#### **Discussion**

- In terms of accessibility to mobility scooters, it was noted that some sections of the WCP are barrier free. Making information available on an interactive map would be very useful. There are some good examples e.g. in Pembrokeshire where removable of barriers has had cumulative effect. Google Trekker has been carried out for the [Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail](#) which makes it possible to view images of the whole Trail on Google Street view.
- 100 itineraries would be developed for WCP some of these will be targeted at mobility scooters and prams etc. The intention is to have a year-round product and ensure people know where they can start and the facilities available.
- Noted that signage had faded in places, NRW pay authorities for maintenance including for signage.
- In terms of Welsh people connecting to the WCP the user survey indicated about half of users were aware they were using WCP. There is an intention to increase this through iconic branding.

- Given the mapping and spatial information now available, 'access' in the context of the National Access Forum has a broader meaning.
- Discussion on the importance and role of mapping. Augmented reality is helping to make further connections e.g. with heritage. Suggestion that Ordnance Survey could be invited to come to a future meeting.

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## 5. Contributions from all

*See NAFW Contributions 3 July 2018 in addition the following points were made:*

- **BHS:** Highlighting the materials developed for the Dead Slow campaign, Mark Weston offered to demonstrate the virtual reality film at a future meeting.
- **NFU:** drew attention to the issues in their written contribution on responsible dog walking and the costs of diseases spread through dog faeces to livestock. Reference was made to the [Dog Walking Code](#) which was developed in partnership.
- **YHA:** had responded to the consultation on the [Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013 - Post-Legislative Scrutiny](#). YHA are interested in improvements and ensuring routes are up to a good quality standard. There is an opportunity to bridge the gap between Active Travel and make improvements through ROWIP especially in rural areas. There are issues in terms of ensuring connections with rail and rail franchises.
- **Canoe Wales:** noted that the issue in their update where attempts were being made to charge tolls for access were because of the lack of clarity in water related access rights.
- **NRW:** In addition to the written update, Jont Bulbeck noted that NRW would be refreshing its Stakeholder Engagement arrangements. NRW are drafting briefing notes for stakeholders and relevant authorities in relation to the ongoing exceptional conditions as a result of the hot weather. The Fire Severity Index is hosted by the Met Office and can be accessed [online](#). The briefing note can be made available. It was noted that deliberate fires are a problem.

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## 6. Any Other Business

Members were advised that Ruth Hall is stepping down as Chair, as her term as NRW Board member is coming to an end. Jont presented Ruth with a gift from the Forum and staff and thanked her for all her work as Chair, being a strong advocate for the Forum and being open and available to members.

Howard Davies will be taking up the Chair and took the opportunity to share his background in landscape policy and his interests in access with the Forum.

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## **7. Dates of next meetings**

- The provisional date of 6<sup>th</sup> November for the next meeting is subject to change depending on response from the Minister.
  - Members were invited to consider items for inclusion on future agendas and to pass these through to Carys
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