

Ogwen Users Forum
11 November 2015 4.30p.m

Present

Iwan Jones (chair)	Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)
Helen Pye	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Gwyn Thomas	Blaen y Nant
Hywel Roberts	Natural Resources Wales
Dewi Davies	National Trust
Guto Roberts	Cwm Idwal Partnership
Rob Spencer	Plas y Brenin
Carys Dafydd	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Jonathan Cawley	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Mal Creasey	Mountain Leaders Instructors
Arwel Johnston	Tenant
Edwina Johnston	Tenant
Paul Rawlinson	Translator
Catrin Williams	Translator

Apologies

Emyr Williams; Paula Roberts; Mair Huws; Edward Jones; Naomi Jones; Jerome and Saskia; Bedwyr ap Gwyn; Mair Leveret; Dewi Roberts; Andy Harbach; Alwyn Griffiths; Huw Green; Wil Sandison.

1. The chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. He welcomed Helen Pye and Dewi Davies who were at the meeting for the first time in their new posts with the National Park and National Trust respectively. Rob Spencer was also representing Plas y Brenin for the first time.

2. Notes from the last meeting

a. The accuracy of the notes was accepted.

b. Matters arising -

- Page 2 Guto Roberts said that he had been in touch with Huw and Gavin – who work on the road in the vicinity and that they had confirmed that Iolo Tegid is still responsible for the A5 at Ogwen.
- Page 4 it was noted that Rhys Evans of the National Trust had been looking with no success for a suitable space for an overflow parking ground. A short discussion on the matter ensued especially regarding the parking on the pavement. Arwel Johnson said that 40 miles per hour signs should be erected on the A5 on the approach to Ogwen.
- It was also noted that it would be possible to demolish the fence between the Youth Hostel and the national Park's car park – and thereby create more parking spaces. But it was noted that this wasn't possible as the Youth Hostel needed the space for camping.

3. Update on recent activities in Ogwen, Guto Roberts, Cwm Idwal Partnership.

- A helicopter had recently carried enough stones/rocks to the Cwm to enable an additional 70 meters of path could be built in the wet area on the lower path on the further side of the lake.
- He has been working in partnership with Neuadd Ogwen and the police in Bethesda on a project called Discovering Dyffryn Ogwen. The aim of the project is to encourage young people's respect and interest in their local landscape and community. With mentoring from professional people, they have already been taking photographs of the area; the next step will be to produce a film.
- An archaeologist and a historian have recently been in the Cwm to investigate the 'whetstone' quarry.
- People continue to be irresponsible regarding their dogs. The plan is to erect sign – (with a dog on a lead) at the start of the footpath up the Cwm. Helen Pye said that the National Park had suitable signs – but that they usually were only used during the lambing period – she said she would in touch with Guto to discuss the matter further. Guto added that it might be

worth organising a 'breeding bird survey' – and if it can be proved that dogs disturb the birds then they can be excluded from the Cwm during this period. There ensued a discussion on the matter with Arwel Johnson saying that many dog owners leave their dogs off the lead in front of the Ogwen building. Gwyn Thomas asked what would be the attitude of the organisations present at the meeting if farmers started shooting dogs. Guto Roberts responded that farmers were within their rights to shoot dogs that were worrying their sheep.

It was agreed that initially a sign to keep dogs on a lead would be put up to see whether that would make any difference before considering any further actions. Gwyn Thomas asked about the current shepherding situation in Cwm Idwal. In reply Guto Roberts said that there had been problems regarding the insurance but that the National Trust was drawing up a new contract.

4. An update on Ogwen Cottage.

Dewi Davies said that he had been in post for 3 months, and that Ogwen Cottage's doors have been open to children and young people for the past two months. The Trust is working in partnership with Outward Bound who organise outdoor activities for children with the Trust being responsible for the food etc side of the venture. Although it's early days, the future looks promising – the Outward Bound staff are very happy and the feedback from the schools has been excellent.

The ranger's hut will be opening in the near future. The staff from Tan y Celyn will be moving to work in the part of the building where the stores used to be kept.

He invited everyone to call round for a cup of tea.

5. An update on interpretation at Ogwen.

(In Naomi Jones's absence, the report was read by the chairman).

- A new film has been commissioned by 'Film Up High'. The film will be shown at the centre and will show the landscape's diversity and activities in Cwm Idwal and neighbouring areas. The film should arrive within the next two weeks. Two further films will be shown on the Authority's website to promote the site.
- Following a site meeting with Helen Pye and Nia Roberts, it was decided to make small adjustments by January to enhance the provision already provided. The adjustments will include:

- a. Create a simple manual for the person who will be responsible for opening and closing the building so that they know how to use the instruments.
 - b. Once the film from 'Film Up High' is received it will be checked to see whether the quality of the film will have an effect on the look of the film (Currently the quality is lacking and there is uncertainty whether this is a problem with the film or a problem with the projector). If the visual quality is still poor we will experiment with using a screen rather than projecting the film.
 - c. There will be better provision to display leaflets.
 - d. Foamex posters depicting #cwmidwal60 will be printed to form part of exhibition permanently.
 - e. We shall assess the possibility of producing more of the internal benches.
 - f. We shall also at the possibility of installing a plaque near the Darwin Wall to draw visitors' notice to the leaflets.
- Early in the New Year Naomi aims to call a meeting with the Cwm Idwal Partnership so that the Authority can assess the needs of the interpretation room, and draw up a new interpretation plan. This will not necessarily mean that everything in the room will be changed. We shall look closely at which messages we need to communicate and the best way to do so. Nothing will be done without consulting with partnership and the National Trust specifically, remembering their substantial initial investment to the interpretation room.

She said that if there were any questions, people were welcome to contact her directly.

Dewi Davies said that the National Trust would be developing an element of interpretation on the Trust's site and that it would be good to have a discussion to avoid duplication.

Guto Roberts and Dewi Davies left the room at 5.30.

6. An update on the current situation on the site. Due to Edward Jones's absence his report was read by the Chairman -

"Firstly I would like apologise that I can't be present today.

Since the last meeting there have been two important developments regarding the site:

- The long awaited confirmation has been received that the building has reached 'BREEAM's excellent level requirement. Many barriers had to be overcome but with perseverance it was finally achieved. Thanks to everybody who was involved in the process.
- In spite of many individuals from the various contracting companies leaving their posts it was possible to get the main contractor back to rectify the deficits that had been identified and the work is currently in hand.
- For information, the lack of a current bus service and the parking problems have been discussed by the Green Key Partnership. We are compiling data on the number of vehicles parking on site and the number of walkers going to Cwm Idwal so that the Green Key Partnership can assess the feasibility of reintroducing a Bus service between Bethesda and Ogwen.

7. The Carneddau Proposed Project.

Jonathan Cawley reported that the Authority had decided to re-present an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. They will be working in partnership with the National Trust – CADW have also shown interest in being part of the project. This current application will be more focused in its approach and will focus on the towns located in the northern area of the Carneddau, Bethesda, Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr – there will be a strong element of involving the communities in the project. The project will include the environment and the history – there is a wealth of ancient monuments on the Carneddau. Gwynedd Archaeological Trust is helping with writing the application and it will be submitted in May.

Arwel Johnson said that the Carneddau are quieter than the Snowdon massif and that people appreciate that – he questioned whether it was wise to draw more attention to the area. Jonathan Cawley replied saying that the project's aim was to interpret the area in a sensitive manner, currently the archaeology is not managed, and there is a wealth of place names connected with the area too.

Gwyn Thomas asked who would benefit from the project?

The project will work with the landowners and with people who use the mountains. It would inspire people to come out - many local people are not aware of the 'treasure' that is in their back garden.

Gwyn Thomas said that he thought one of the main barriers for local communities was the cost of transport – that schools can't afford buses. He said that he thought that the National Park Authority should concentrate on getting more local families out to the countryside – and that they should also work more with schools. He went on to say that he did not think that the building in Ogwen had been a success - there had been many problems with the place. Helen Pye replied that as someone who had moved into the area to work, she thought that the building was a wonderful resource that was appreciated by many. She conceded that there were room for improvement in some minor areas.

Gwyn Thomas went on to say that there was a fundamental problem with capital projects Jonathan Cawley said that HLF project had a strong element of sustainability built into the projects.

8. Any other business

a. The bus situation in Ogwen. Arwel Johnson reported about the mysteries of a bus that has been travelling recently from Bethesda to Llanrwst – leaving early in the morning and returning at around 6.25pm. He said that he had followed this buss one time and that it had turned round at one on the lay-byes by the lake. There is no mention of the bus on the Gwynedd time tables!

b. Creating a path to Rhaeadr y Benglog. Mal Creasey said that Rhaeadr Ogwen was one of the best waterfalls in Wales if not Britain and that it was a shame that there was no easy way to gain access to see the waterfall. Arwel Johnson added that people often asked the way to the waterfall.

Helen Pye said that she used to work for the Brecon Beacons National Park and that she had some experience of constructing paths to waterfalls.

She said that she would meet with a representative of the National Trust who is the landowner to discuss the matter. It was added that there is an

old drover's road – which predates the old A5 – and that it might be a possibility to also improve that path.

It was agreed that if it's decided to go ahead with any construction work – it would have to be unobtrusive.

- c. Helen Pye gave a short update on changes since she was appointed Senior Warden for the Park.
- Alan Pritchard is responsible for the Ogwen Valley once again with Helen herself taking responsibility for the Capel Curig area, which means that she will be calling in at Ogwen on a regular basis.
 - Recently the National Park has had the loan of the Google Trekker, and the wardens have been walking on various paths and routes within the National Park including up Snowdon, Cader Idris and Cwm Idwal. The footage, which is similar to an off road Google street view will be available for public viewing in the near future.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 6.30pm.