

Ogwen Users Forum

11 November 2014

Present

Edward Jones	Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)
Iwan Jones (chair)	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Gwyn Thomas	Blaen y Nant
Saskia Wardenier	Idwal Cottage YHA
Mair Huws	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Dewi Davies	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Guto Roberts	Cwm Idwal Partnership
Simon Rogers	National Trust
Trystan Edwards	National Trust
Carys Dafydd	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Rhys Evans	National Trust
Hywel Roberts	Natural Resources Wales
Martin Doyle	Plas y Brenin
Arwel Johnston	Tenant
Edwina Johnston	Tenant
Gareth Price	Scottish Power
Catrin Williams	Translator
Arthur Griffiths	Translator

Apologies

Emyr Williams; Jenny Crouch; Paula Roberts; Catrin Roberts; Iolo Tegid, Dewi Roberts; Andy Harbach; Mark Balaam (has finished working with Gwynedd council))

1. The chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.
2. The notes from the last meeting held on April 4th were accepted for their accuracy
There were no matters arising that weren't covered in the agenda.

3. The situation of cars parking on the pavement near the entrance to the Centre

In the absence of Iolo Tegid who had to apologise due to other work commitments, the group discussed the lack of available parking spaces during busy periods and the ensuing safety implications. The main concern is that cars are parked on both sides of the A5 – making it dangerous to cross the road. Guto Roberts added that parked cars obstructed access for wheelchair users and families with buggies. A number of ideas were discussed including restricting the speed limit to 40 or traffic lights system.

It was decided that it would be beneficial to have another site visit with Iolo Tegid, with Guto Roberts; Dewi Davies; Gwyn Thomas; Trystan Edwards; Arwel Johnson and a representation from the national Park Authority's planning department to attend. Carys Dafydd to arrange. It was noted that Iolo Tegid was very busy at the moment and that it could be some months before he was able to attend. There was also a request the Iolo Tegid attend the next meeting of the Forum with options of what could be done

4. Undergrounding power cables.

Geraint Price from Scottish Power was at the Forum to discuss the forthcoming undergrounding of electricity cables. He outlined the background of the works noting the barriers that had to be overcome before the scheme could go ahead. The area in question extends from the cattle grid on the old road, going behind the buildings to the other side of the A5. The electricity will be switched off for a day during the works – the exact day will be done following discussions with the people affected. In response to a question asking whether a generator will be installed – he said that it was not the company's policy. The old road will also be closed for a period. Maps of the proposed works will be available.
He agreed to contact Carys Dafydd if he had any updates to share with the group.

5. An update on recent activities in Cwm Idwal – Guto Roberts, Cwm Idwal Partnership.

- An event celebrating 60 years since Cwm Idwal's designation as a nature reserve will be held in the next two weeks – the date will depend on the minister's availability. Forum members will be invited. During the event a slate plaque of Evan Roberts will be unveiled and re-located on the path.
- There was a recent campaign to get Cwm Idwal into the 100 most popular geosites in Britain. It was shortlisted in the fire and ice section.
- Iolo Williams was filming in the cwm recently for a programme on nature reserves, it will be broadcast in January.
- Capital works carried out over the year have included protecting peat by reinforcing the paths. Putting in kissing gates – they're more efficient barriers for sheep.
- A graphic designer has been asked to design a poster that will try to illustrate how important it is to keep dogs on a lead. Guto said that there have been cases of dogs killing sheep recently. Early next year a survey of birds will be carried out in Cwm Idwal - and the results could form a basis to have dogs banned from the cwm from March to September.

6. COPA – Bedwyr Ap Gwyn – Menter Iaith Conwy.

- Bedwyr ap Gwyn introduced himself and gave a brief background to the scheme noting the increase in the number of Welsh speaking outdoor activities trainers that has occurred since the inception of the scheme. This element of the scheme will be finishing in the near future due to the gap between the end of the current European grant funding stream and the start of the next round.
- He went on to say that Menter Iaith Conwy are working in partnership with other agencies such as the BMC and Plas Y Brenin to create a document that will list and interpret place names in the upland areas. The aim is to increase respect towards the people who live and work here.
- The Conference on place names which was supposed to have been held in October will now be held next February in Glan-Llyn.

7. The current situation on site - Edward Jones SNPA

- The pay and park machine has been operational for some months, following early teething problems. This is the only machine of its kind in Wales – which works by

connecting to the internet. Recent training has enabled staff to access a computer programme which makes it possible to see what time people buy the tickets – it was apparent that a number of people arrive on the site between 6 and 8 in the morning – less come in the afternoon.

- The final documents for the BREEAM environmental assessment award will be submitted in the near future. It's looking likely that the building will receive an 'excellence' rating.
- The contractor has been chased over some minor aspects of the building work that are still outstanding.
- Dewi Davies - head warden of the northern region now has his base in the building
- Interpretation – there have been ongoing problems with the interpretation elements on site. The 3d land mass doesn't always work; there have also been problems with the film. Natural Resources Wales have commissioned Owain Wyn's Burum company to audit the interpretation of various locations including Ogwen.

Arwel Johnson said that he thought there should be more warden presence in the building – that people appreciate meeting people and gaining information face to face. There is no staff presence on the weekend. Mair Huws replied saying that due to recent changes in the warden service it could not be guaranteed that there would be regular warden presence on the site.

In response to concerns that the building had been locked early she said that the incidence arose due to a misunderstanding, and that the Pen y Pass staff were now aware that the building was locked later by the cleaning lady.

Martin Doyle said that the building looked bleak and unwelcoming from the outside and that people weren't sure whether they could enter – the interpretation room isn't visual enough. He went on to say that the space wasn't being used to its full potential. And that interpretation which is so dependent on technology has to be right.

There was consensus that the computers do crash on occasions – one of the reasons being that people drape their wet coats on the 3d map – on other occasions children push all the buttons on the screens at the same time.

A discussion ensued on how things could be improved – for example the data could be put on a loop system; space could be used to hold occasional exhibitions; the 3d model could be relocated on to the wall – which would release more floor space and would stop people from putting their wet coats on it.

Mair Huws said that Naomi Jones would appreciate any suggestion and/or ideas – and that people could send emails to her and that she would forward them to Naomi.

Rhys Evans added that we have a fantastic building here and even though everything doesn't work all the time – we should celebrate the building and recognise how much things have improved.

8. CAN Report

There was an opportunity to discuss the CAN (Communities and Nature) report's findings. The survey was carried out during 2013/14. It was mentioned that it would be interesting to know how many visitors went up to Cwm Idwal compared to how many came into the centre and that it might be useful to carry out another survey. Mair Huws said that Paula Roberts from Bangor University had offered to help with survey works and that she would contact her.

9. Any other business

- Improved access to Ogwen Falls. A request had been received by Mal Creasey to discuss the possibility of facilitating better access to the waterfall. Arwel Johnson said that there had always been access to the waterfall. It was decided to discuss the matter further at the next meeting with Mal Creasey present.
- The future of Ogwen Cottage. Trystan Edwards said that the National Trust has been successful in securing Ogwen Cottage at a recent auction. He said it was very early days at the moment to report on any proposed developments.
- Staff who currently work in Tan y Maes will relocate to work from the back of the building. - This could be beneficial to have a greater presence wardens might work together with partners to offer courses outside - but too early to say for sure. He said he would be interested to hear from anyone who knew the original name of Ogwen Cottage.
- **Trystan agreed to send important updates to the Forum via Carys Dafydd**