

# Ogwen Users Forum Notes

22 April 2015 4.00pm

## Present

Edward Jones	Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)
Iwan Jones (chair)	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Naomi Jones	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Gwyn Thomas	Blaen y Nant
Jerome Paul Verbech	Idwal Cottage
Dewi Davies	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Guto Roberts	National Trust
Dewi Roberts	National Trust
Carys Dafydd	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Rhys Evans	National Trust
Alison Cousins	Capel Curig Community Council
Andy Harbach	Ogwen Mountain Rescue
Arwel Johnston	Tenant
Edwina Johnston	Tenant
Catrin Williams	Translator
Arthur Griffiths	Translator

## Apologies

Emyr Williams; Paula Roberts; Gwydion Tomos; Mair Huws; Mal Creasey; Trystan Edwards.

1. The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.

2. Notes from the last meeting.

a. The accuracy of the notes

Page 4 paragraph 4 – it was noted that it was Martin Doyle who had commented that the building looked bleak and unwelcoming from the outside.

Page 5 Any other business. Arwel Johnson said that what he had said was that there had always been access to the waterfall – rather than there had never been access to the waterfall.

b. Matters arising from the notes – cars parking on the pavement. A message had been received from Iolo Tegid saying that a number of staff from the Trunk Road Agency including himself were being transferred to work directly for the Welsh Government. At the present time he did not know whether he would still be responsible for the A5 at Ogwen. He promised to get in touch as soon as he knew who would be responsible for the area. Guto Roberts said that he would contact Huw and Gavin who work frequently undertake roadwork in the area to ask who had been responsible for this stretch of the A5.

There ensued a lively discussion on the dangers that the cars parking on the pavement pose. It was reported that the situation was very bad over the Easter period with cars parking on both sides of the road making it impossible for two buses to pass.

It was suggested that photos should be taken when the situation was at its worse and these could be used in the push to try and achieve change. Gwyn Thomas said that cars park on the pavement even when the car park is empty – as they weren't willing to pay. Others parked on the passing spaces on the old road.

It was noted that Iolo Tegid had suggested at an earlier site meeting that erecting 40 signs could help the situation.

Some members expressed frustration that the parking issue had been raised on a number of previous occasions but that nothing appeared to have been done to resolve the issue.

It was agreed that Carys Dafydd would contact Iolo Tegid again to arrange a meeting with Guto Roberts, Dewi Davies, Gwyn Thomas, Rhys Evans, and Arwel Johnston together with one of the National Park Authority's planners attending.

Alison Cousins said that she Capel Curig Community Council would also write to the department expressing their concerns regarding the situation.

3. An update on recent activities in Ogwen, Guto Roberts, Cwm Idwal Partnership.
  - As part of the Cwm Idwal 60 Birthday celebrations the archaeologist Ian Brooks had visited the Cwm. Fortunately a mole had been burrowing there. Whilst looking through the molehills they came across pieces of quarts that had been shaped as tools to treat animal hide and meat. The quarts were sent for analysis with the result was that they were from the late Mesolithic period 6 – 8,000 years old, from the time when the first hunter gatherers came to the Cwm following the end of the Ice Age.  
A further study to the habitation in the area will be conducted in the near future.
  - During the summer Bangor Sound City will be responsible for installing a sound journey around the Cwm. Rebeca Horrocks is the sound artist who won the commission.
  - A study of small mammals in the Cwm conducted by Bangor University has revealed that they might partially be the reason for the lack of trees. The reason given is that the small mammals are partial to the nutritious new bark on young trees.
  - There has been a problem with people making holes in fences so that their dogs can run in the Cwm.
  - It is hoped that a new publicity campaign will be more successful in persuading dog owners not to leave dog mess on the paths, or leave dog mess in bags in the Cwm. Together with Keep Wales Tidy – it is hoped that a stronger campaign can be held this year.
4. Current situation on site, Edward Jones APCE
  - By now all the evidence needed for the building to be assessed under the BREEAM environmental system are in place. It's looking promising that the building will be graded 'Excellent'. The process of collating evidence has not been easy due mainly to one of the sub-contractors going bankrupt.
  - 20% of people who pay for parking do so using a card; the Authority hopes to extend the system to other car parks.

- Recently there has been a spate of cuts to the electricity supply – this can have a detrimental effect on a number of things including shortening the lifespan of the projector bulbs, problems with phones and the water needs to be treated continually. As a result the Authority has looked into the spare capacity of the generator.
- An extra recycling bin has been ordered for the start of the season.

Arwel Johnston asked if it was possible to have more signs saying that it was possible to pay for parking by card.

Gwyn Thomas enquired what use was made of the parking fees – Edward Jones replied that it was used for the upkeep of the Ogwen building as well as paths upkeep. Gwyn Thomas went on to say that he was surprised at the reluctance of some people to pay – and that signs with information regarding what the proceeds were used for might be beneficial. He also asked whether, during busy periods, it would be possible to use overspill car parks. Arwel Johnston reminded the Forum that the new building had meant the loss of 20 parking spaces.

Edwina Johnston remarked that the money from the parking used to go to the Green Key scheme.

A discussion ensued on the loss of the bus service between Bethesda and Llyn Ogwen. Alison Cousin said that the Conwy Valley was experiencing the same problems.

At 5.00p. Jerome Verbech left the meeting due to work commitments.

- Rhys Evans said that he agreed that not enough was being done regarding health and safety on the site – and that **he would take responsibility for organising a sub group to move things forward whilst waiting for the availability of someone from the trunk road agency.**
- **It was also agreed that Carys Dafydd would send out dates asking when it would be convenient for him to attend and if not to ask another member of the trunk road to come instead.**
- A discussion ensued on the possibility of having a temporary overflow car park, although some were of the view that this would not affect the parking on the pavement during busy times.

- Edwina Johnston asked whether it would be possible to have the contact details of somebody who could repair the toilet on weekends if they needed attention. She also said it would be beneficial to have a sign that could be put on the door when the toilet was out of order. There was agreement that the toilets blocked on a fairly regular basis.

Edward Jones agreed to send out her the contact details for the plumber. An update on interpretation at Ogwen – Naomi Jones.

- There have been less problems recently with the computers and projectors
- A small group had met recently to discuss the 3d model. They had agreed that the solutions to the previous problems would be to go low tech – putting labels with place names on the model itself – rather than projecting them onto the model.
- A discussion had also taken place re putting a canopy above the large screen when the sun was shining – this the option that will be considered first rather than using a television screen.
- She went on to say that they have to careful with any changes made so they do not spoil the look of the interior.
- Feedback cards will be available in the building in the near future. The feedback received to date has been favourable – but she added that people might feel it easier to be more honest on paper.
- A new section will be developed on the National Park’s website with information on Cwm Idwal.

Arwel Johnston said that one of the main question asked by visitors was – what was in the Interpretation room? He believed that the dark film on the windows meant that people thought that it was closed. He suggested that having ‘open’ signs on either the window panels or on the door would improve the situation.

Guto Roberts said that one of his responsibilities for the coming year would be to develop an education pack. He said that the geology leaflets that are now available have been well received by colleges - but noted that they are somewhat too complicated for schools use.

He also suggested that it would be a good idea to seek copies of old Welsh films which have connections with the valley so that they could be shown on the big

screen.

Naomi Jones said there was no objection in principle but funding might be an issue.

Alison Cousins added there was nothing about the history of art and artists in the valley in the building. She had brought a watercolour of Cwm Idwal by Warren Williams to show the Forum members and said that thousands of pictures of the area are stored in the National Library in Aberystwyth.

##### 5. An update on Ogwen Cottage - Rhys Evans.

- There had been a great response to the call for partners to provide outdoor activities. He said that they are now in talks with one potential partner but that he could not reveal the name at this time.
- The staff who used to work at Tan y Celyn are now working from Ogwen Cottage.
- Despite advertising for two seasonal rangers to work from Ogwen Cottage it was only possible to employ one. She will be starting in the coming weeks and working over the summer period. The original intention was to build a small shed, but due to planning opposition from Natural Resources Wales – a Gazebo will be used as shelter instead. She will be working as a point of contact, providing information to visitors to the valley.

Alison Cousins said that Capel Curig Community Council were very concerned regarding the lack of presence of SNPA Wardens at the site. She said she was surprised that spending occurred at the building but there was no one there to greet the visitors. Arwel and Edwina Johnston also agreed, saying that visitors are asking all kinds of questions. Dewi Davies replied that budget cuts were the main reason why it was not possible to have continuous presence on the site. He also said that the nature of the warden's work has changed over the last few years. He went on to say that Guto Roberts was based there during the week and that he was usually there first thing in the morning. Further, a seasonal warden will be appointed shortly sharing his / her time between Pen y Pass and Ogwen. This, coupled with the seasonal ranger appointed by the National Trust will ensure that there will be staff presence on the site at peak times.

The meeting concluded at 6.00p.m.