

Ogwen Users Forum

November 7th 2013

Present

Aneurin Phillips - Chair	- Snowdonia National Park Authority
Emyr Williams	- Snowdonia National Park Authority
Pete Trumper	- Snowdonia National Park Authority
Jenny Crouch	- Natural Resources Wales
Rob Gunby	- Natural Resources Wales
Marc Balaam	- Cyngor Gwynedd
Rhys Evans	- The National Trust
Guto Roberts	- Partnership Officer
Dewi Roberts	- National Trust
James Holding	- Ogwen Cottage
Saskia Herbeing	- Idwal YHA
Mair Huws	- Snowdonia National Park Authority
Dewi Davies	- Snowdonia National Park Authority
Carys Dafydd	- Snowdonia National Park Authority
Arwel Johnson	- Tenant
Edwina Johnson	- Tenant
Daniel Moncrieff	- Rhyd y Creuau
Gwyn Thomas	- Blaen y Nant
Catrin Roberts	- Capel Curig Community Council
Mair Leverett	- Llandygai Community Council
Paula Roberts	- Bangor University
Chris Lloyd	- Ogwen Mountain Rescue
Catrin Soraya Williams	- Translator
Gwynfor Owen	- Translator

Apologies

Euros Jones: Natural Resources Wales; Hywel Roberts, Natural Resources Wales; Elfyn Jones BMC; Bethesda Community Council.

1. The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves. He gave a brief introduction to the Users Forum – saying that there had been unanimous support for setting up a Users Forum expressed at the meeting held on the centre's opening day He reminded members of the main points of the Terms of Reference, emphasising that this was a Forum to give opinions, share information and good practice rather than to make decisions.

2. **Visitor's Survey** – Jenny Crouch, Natural Resources Wales

Jenny Crouch gave brief background information to the CAN scheme – Communities And Nature - the European Fund which was the main funder of the Ogwen initiative. She said that one of the main aims of the fund was to encourage new visitors to the countryside and to stay for longer once here. £14.5 million has already been spent in Wales's convergence areas including Lôn Las Ogwen – from Tregarth to Bethesda and Tŷ Hyll in Betws y Coed. She went on to say that as part of the grant process it was a requirement to do a visitors survey. In Ogwen, for the next few weeks Rob Gunby will be questioning people every Friday – during the rest of the week it will be possible to fill in the survey forms and post them in the specific box. The survey forms will be collated and sent on to the Cardiff School of Business for analysis. **She said that once the work had been completed she would report back to the Forum with the results.**

3. **An update of recent activities in Cwm Idwal** - Guto Roberts, Partnership Officer

- Recent activities include repairing footpaths and building traditional boundaries. A helicopter will carry rocks up to the Cwm before the end of the month so that the work can be completed.
- A number of guided walks have been held including a walk for Conwy Walking Festival and the MOSAIC project to encourage people from minority ethnic backgrounds to access the National Park.
- A number of school pupils and students have visited the Cwm. There was good feedback on the Social Media with Coleg Menai students re-tweeting.
- In the pipeline is an event to raise awareness of the problems that dogs can cause.
- Following the success of the Eryri Marathon – there is an intention to look at the possibility of organising a race round Llyn Idwal.
- Another company have been making enquiries regarding organising an endurance race and using Cwm Idwal for part of the race. It is envisaged that the number taking part would be low but that the race would have a high profile.

Jenny Crouch asked if the recent wet weather had had an adverse effect on the paths in Cwm Idwal. Guto Roberts responded saying that substantial stepping stones would be airlifted by the helicopter to be placed in the wet areas.

Emyr Williams gave brief background information on the decision to set up the partnership between Snowdonia National Park Authority; The National Trust and Natural Resources Wales – the need arose so that the work in Cwm Idwal could be coordinated. The decision to develop the site arose during one of the Partnership's meetings. The Partnership now needs to decide on the day to day responsibilities of running the building.

4. **The current situation on site**– Pete Trumper – Snowdonia National Park Authority

- Cash free parking. The pay and display machines are not currently working – this is due to technical problems. Eventually they will be able to accept payment by credit/debit card. It is hoped that they will be operational in the next 3 – 4 weeks. The satellite dish has been installed.
- Information was given regarding a potential ice monitoring scheme in the Cwm. It is known that climbing on ice that has not frozen solid can damage the rare Arctic plants. As a result of the scheme it will be possible for individuals to access information on the condition of the ice via the internet before they leave their home. A small aerial will be placed on the outside wall of the centre which will receive information from sensors placed 8 inches under the earth in strategic locations in the Cwm.
- The current state of the building. There are some problems that are outstanding – in particular with the rain harvesting system. These will be addressed during the 'defect liability' period. The building contractors – Derwen Llyn have put the building forward for a Local Buildings Regulation Award.
- CAN condition, according to the funders CAN it is grant condition that a new business/venture is established as part of the project. The venture will be sharing office space with the Partnership Officer. An advert asking for expression of interest had been placed in the Daily Post last week – with the closing date on November 18th. He said that the purpose of the new business would have to agree with the Partnership's purposes; it is also a requirement that they are able to offer a bi-lingual service.
- Aneurin Phillips said that discussions had taken place with 'SP Energy Networks' to underground electrical cables in the area – and that this is now on their work programme, but that no timetable has been set as yet.

5. An update on biking developments in the area - Mark Balaam, Cyngor Gwynedd

Mark Balaam gave an update on recent developments on Lôn Las Ogwen. He said that the work in Parc Meurig has been completed and that 99% of the work on the length passing the Rugby Club has been completed. The hope now is that they will be successful in their bid for additional funding from CAN in order to extend the path through Dinas tunnel. He will be working in partnership with CADW and the local community on a scheme called 'Our Heritage' producing information of the slate's journey on the Lôn Las. Consultation will take place over the next few months, care of Sian Shakespear and following this, work to market and promote the route will be commissioned. Mark Balaam said that in his opinion Lôn Las Ogwen had the potential to be with the best cycle routes in Wales.

He added that he had marketing documents fresh off the press and that **once they had been translated he would send them electronically to Carys Dafydd so that they could be distributed to Forum members.**

Arwel Johnson asked if bikers would have to continue to use the A5 when leaving the Centre to join the path towards Capel Curig. In answer it was said that there were no firm plans at the moment.

Gwyn Thomas asked if there was an intention to repair the bike gate on the old road, he said that it was often being left open and that as a result a number of his animals were escaping. Mark Balaam replied that it would be necessary to contact the Highways Department. **Dewi Roberts from the National Trust added that he would take a look at the gate.**

Dewi Davies asked whether monitoring counters ' had been placed on the Lôn Las - Mark Balaam replied that the counter in Port Penrhyn had recorded 100,000 visits and that another counter had recently been placed in Bethesda.

6. Requests to include items on the agenda

- Daniel Moncreiff wanted to know if it would be possible to have access to the interpretation room after 4.00p.m. He said that it was often 4.00p.m by the time they arrived at Ogwen - with a large number of children.

Emyr Williams replied that the current opening hours reflected the Partnership Officer's working hours; he added that the partnership should agree on a number of matters to do with administrating the building.

Pete Trumper added that he had spoken to the cleaner's line manager and that there was a possibility that the opening hours could be extended to 7.00p.m – but that this had not confirmed yet.

It was agreed that Carys Dafydd would email the Forum with the new opening hours once they had been agreed.

- Chris Lloyd of the Ogwen Mountain Rescue Team wanted to know if it would be possible to give more prominence to promoting mountain safety, he added that there was a great opportunity here to provide information such as what to do if an accident occurred - who to phone etc.

Mair Huws answered that Mountain Safety had been part of the interpretation brief and that 5 safety messages had been identified.

Emyr Williams added that there would only be one leaflets rack in the Interpretation room and that aim was to provide information electronically – thereby keeping the room tidy and clean looking.

7. Any other business

Gwyn Thomas raised the issue of dogs once more saying that the problem of dogs harassing and killing the sheep was continuous – and that the number of dogs was increasing. He said that although there were signs on the gates warning owners to keep their dogs on the lead – they were being ignored. Guto Roberts replied that the matter had been discussed recently at the wardens meeting and that they had discussed the possibility of banning dogs from Cwm Idwal if the situation got out of control.

Catrin Roberts said that the litter problem was also on the increase. She went on to say that more consideration should be given to local issues and history in the centre. Emyr Williams replied that the intention was to develop the information available in the centre and that could be done easily due to the flexibility of the electronic media – but that this would not happen within the next 6 months.

A discussion ensued on how to capture information on local history and traditions. Catrin Roberts said that the Friends of St Juliette's Church had a

good archive of local history. Guto Roberts said that it would be possible to include information on the social media. Mountaineering history in the area was also discussed - with a consensus that Pen y Pass might be more appropriate as a venue to display mountaineering artefacts.

Arwel Johnson asked what had happened to the slate plaque inscribed with Ieuan Wyn's 'englyn'. Guto Roberts replied that it was being kept safely at Tan y Celyn and that it would be relocated to the start of the path leading to Cwm Idwal.

Arwel Johnson also asked when it would be possible to have access to the internet in the building - Emyr Williams replied that there were technical problems but that he was hopeful that the matter would be resolved in the near future, but that it would not be possible to have public Wi-Fi in the building. Jamie Holding raised the issue of cars parking on the pavement on the A5. He said that there had been 2 recent incidences that could have been very serious – one where a small boy had been knocked over by a car.

It was agreed that the Authority would contact the Highways department at Gwynedd council to discuss the matter.

Before concluding, the Chair asked whether everybody was happy with the format of the meeting – there was general agreement that the informal format of the meeting was appropriate. Possible dates for the next meeting was discussed - it was agreed that it should be held in either March or April, before the start of the tourist season.

The Chairman thanked everybody for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 5.35.p.m.