

Cross Party Group Title:	Outdoor Activity Sector in Wales
Date of Meeting:	12 July 2022
Location:	Via Zoom
Name:	Title:
Huw Irranca-Davies (HI-D)	Chair – Member of the Senedd
Sam Rowlands (SR)	Vice Chair – Member of the Senedd
Julie James	Minister for Climate Change
Rebecca Brough	Secretariat – Ramblers Cymru
Aled Hughes	Office of Cefin Campbell MS
Evan Waters	Office of David Rees MS
Paul Renfro	Member - Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group & Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum Representative
Eben Muse	Member - British Mountaineering Council Representative
Kate Ashbrook	Member - Open Spaces Society Representative
Catherine Williams	Member - Snowdonia Active & Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation Representative
Angela Charlton	Member - Ramblers Cymru Representative
Helen Donnan	Member - British Horse Society Representative
Andy Taylor	Member - Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee & Woodcraft Folk Representative
Mark Jones	Member - Outdoor Partnership Representative
Mike Rosser	Member - Outdoor Education Advisors Panel & Adventure UK Representative
Emma Edwards-Jones	Member - Snowdonia-Active Representative
Alison Roberts	Observer - Natural Resources Wales Representative
Phil Stone	Member – Canoe Wales representative
Chris Munro	Member – Royal Yachting Association representative
Simon Patton	Member – Mountain Training Cymru Representative

Amanda Smith	Member – CAT ZCB Representative
Paul Frost	Member – The Outdoor partnership Representative
Steve Morgan	Member – Plas Menai Representative
Sarah Smith	Observer – Welsh Government official
Simon Pickering	Observer – Welsh Government official
Lara Stace	Observer – Deryn Consulting

Summary of the meeting

Previous minutes accepted as accurate.

Action arising previously:

1. Letter was sent to Welsh government cabinet members, including First Minister regarding outdoor activity and education – responses received including from Vaughan Gething and Jeremy Miles.
2. CPG Senedd members to seek debate opportunity: this will now be pursued in the autumn term, and linked to issues raised in Outdoor Alliance manifesto 2021
3. Update on Research into economic and social value of the outdoors: Existing research links circulated, member invited to share more.

Presentation

Recreational user representatives opened the meeting with a short film outlining why access reform is needed, and a joint presentation on the need to move forward on the recommendations of the recent Access Reform Advisory Group Programme.

Points raised in the presentation were:

- Access reform is imperative for: improving health of the nation; its lifelong learning benefits; economic benefits to tourism and business; its conservation benefits in reconnecting people to nature, especially post-pandemic
- Equitable, enhanced and responsible access for all to land and water needs investment and commitment from Welsh government
- Existing access networks are underfunded and declining in quality, due to years of underinvestment and increased usage pressures, but communities value their access to green and blue spaces and the benefits they bring
- Government has recognised the economic, social and health benefits of access in various strategies: Future Wales; Natural Resources Policy; Healthy Weight Healthy Wales, but reform and investment is needed to realise these benefits
- Demand is growing for outdoor activities and there is associated potential for lifelong learning and environmental protection, alongside building individual and community resilience.
- Importance of quality and equitable outdoor access opportunities for younger generations, and the nature connections this brings, which is at risk due to the closure of outdoor education centres.
- The inclusion of access opportunities in the Sustainable Farming scheme was welcomed

- In November 2021 the outcomes of the Access reform programme were submitted to government, and user groups are keen to see progress being made after what was a lengthy and resource intensive process for many stakeholders
- User groups have common ground and agree on many proposals in the report – but where differences remain, would like to work together and with government to see piloting of possible solutions take place on Welsh Government owned or managed land.
- A timetable for taking forward actions and reform was requested of government, so that benefits can be delivered for the benefit of all users of the outdoors.

In response, the Minister acknowledges and thanked the outdoor sector for its work in supporting the reform agenda, and updated the group that:

- Technical and legal work is still underway on the Access reform proposal advisory Group.
- Due to other pressures, there is no timetable available for progressing reforms, and they are not provided for in the next 2 years legislative programme
- Regarding access to water, scoping is underway and further meeting planned with National Access Forum Chair to consider future work
- Asked the CPG to work with officials to identify a ‘route map’ of easiest changes and longer term options, including what can be progressed without law reform, and what the fastest legislative routes are given the capacity of the Senedd.
- Suggested that changes to guidance or secondary legislation/regulations will be easier to progress
- Invited Chair to write proposing use of Welsh Government estate to trial changes
- The active travel workstream is seeking to address some issues of inconsistencies in networks and maximising access
- The next steps following the 10-year Wales Coast Path report are under consideration
- Further advice on managing conflict between users and examples of good practice are welcomed.
- River quality issues were acknowledged and the ongoing challenges to address pollution given its negative impact on outdoor activities

General Discussion and issues to note

Points raised in general discussion were:

- The role of Cross-Party Groups in other areas in supporting a roadmap approach while maintaining calls for longer term legislative change, and the opportunity this presented the Outdoor Sector CPG
- The importance of community engagement and community action in tackling issues related to water quality, including the example of Llyn Padarn
- Safe provision for horse riders off roads and the need to better maintain bridleways
- Consideration of the decarbonisation of outdoor recreational access including better EV charging provision, where opportunities can’t be provided locally
- Importance of quality provision of access as poor experiences (e.g. blocked paths) can demoralise new users and deter future use
- Water-based users would welcome further opportunities to meet deputy ministers to discuss need for access outside of the planned inland water designations
- Work is underway on and Outdoor Adventure Learning Framework to support to Curriculum for Wales

- Recent research with young people on education for environmental sustainability has shown they wanted better understanding of natural world to better protect it. This makes access even more vital and therefore crucial to creating environmental citizens
- Work in the Clwydian range on developing sustainable recreation opportunities has shown that historic anomalies arise from a piecemeal approach across boundaries; highlights the need for a strategic approach to create better doorstep access.
- User groups can be part of solutions – collaborative projects are underway in Wales (e.g. Paths to Wellbeing project) which engage and develop skills in communities and can support the role of local authorities who have not had consistent funding to address issues
- There is a willingness to work together and share expertise through all members of the group to move the agenda forward
- The cross-portfolio nature of outdoor recreation issues mean the lack of a dedicated Minister for the Outdoors can be an issue, and this is something the Welsh Government should consider in the future

In response to the general discussion, the Minister and WG officials:

- Welcomed the group's offers of sharing good practice, and thanked members for input to reform work to date
- Highlighted the government's move to 3-year funding cycles and anticipated this would help address inconsistencies; invited further discussion on any outstanding issues relating to this
- Tangential legislation could offer opportunities incorporate issues of access reform
- Suggested the Local Places for Nature scheme as a possible funding route for some actions
- Mentioned government is keen to work with National Parks to improve access to public land and the CPG has a role in feeding back on whether this is happening
- Suggested the biodiversity deep dive conference is an opportunity for the CPG to input the importance of access networks and connects to nature
- Urged ongoing consideration of the impact of social deprivation on connectedness to nature and the need to improve educational opportunities
- Confirmed there would be an ongoing role for the CPG to influence the way access is managed in the new Sustainable Farming Scheme

After the Minister left the meeting, the following points were raised:

- the opportunity but capacity challenges for someone within the CPG to take forward challenge of developing the road map
- A suggestion that pooling of financial contributions for user organisation could facilitate a dedicated resource to support this work.
- A possible pilot could focus on shared use and be close to people's homes to make a difference.

Meeting actions

ACTION: Letter to be drafted from the Chair to put formal proposals on a public land pilot to the Minister

ACTION: Add to agenda for next meeting consideration of funding resources to explore what can be progress now and agree a way forward

Next Meeting:

Date & Time: Thursday 15th September 2022, 11:00 - 12:30

Venue: Storey Arms Outdoor Education Centre, Libanus, Brecon, LD3 8NL plus hybrid facilities

Virtual: Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83670789288?pwd=cdKL14SWmVxp2kcpDtCfd43RD7F5E.V.1>

Meeting ID: 836 7078 9288 **Passcode:** 794399