



CYNGOR RHANBARTH / POWYS AREA

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MINUTES OF AREA COUNCIL MEETING: 2 MARCH 2011, PLAS DOLERW, NEWTOWN

Attendance

1/11 Alan Austin (Chair), Alan Rugman (Secretary), Clive Payne, Derek Cosslett, Chris Playford, Kevin Jones, Robert Hanna (Ramblers Cymru)

Apologies

2/11 Harry Chandler, Bob Seabrook, Emlyn Williams, Annette Prince, Matthew Prosser, David Bellamy

Minutes of Area Council meeting on 15 December 2010

3/11 The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Action Items

- 71/10 AA had written to leading PCC members and officers, resisting any cuts to ROW staff and expenditure.
- 74/10 In view of the contribution to Rail Rambles by Ramblers Cymru, no support by Powys Area would be needed in 2011/12.
- 82/10 AR confirmed that Michael Rolt and Stephen Hughes have agreed to remain as Access and Countryside Officers respectively.
- 83/10 M Prosser had confirmed to AA that Welshpool Group would not be nominating a delegate to Welsh Council.
- 84/10 DC referred to possible venues for Area Council meetings in Llandrindod and Rhayader (see 19/11 below).

Matters arising not covered by agenda items

None

Treasurer's Report

4/11 The current balance was £1455. DC confirmed that signatures for cheques had been changed following new appointments. It was agreed that the East Radnor walks leaflets should be written off from the accounts, but made available on the website for purchase at a lower price.

Membership

5/11 AA reported that there were 294 members in Powys in February 2011, a worse than average reduction of 24% from the February 2009 figure of 388. The reasons were unclear. Although more people were actively walking, as apparent from the number of non-Ramblers walking groups in Powys, fewer were prepared to join the national organisation representing walkers' interests. Some Welshpool members were disenchanted about Ramblers, citing factors including the loss of posts in the Cardiff office and (unjustified) perceptions about militancy. AA would speak to Vic Smith in Welshpool Group to see whether they could be one of the 'focus groups' proposed by Ramblers Cymru **ACTION AA**

6/11 Recent membership initiatives by Ramblers London were also discussed. It would be unrealistic to pledge to increase Powys membership by the end of 2011/12, when there had been such a marked fall over the last year or two. There was also a lack of support for the proposal to pay Groups a year's membership fee for each new recruit; money was not an issue and would provide little incentive. It was however AGREED to write to all affiliated walking groups in Powys, emphasising Ramblers' work in helping to keep open the paths enjoyed by those groups. AR would reply to the central office initiatives, explaining the Powys position. **ACTION AA/AR**

Footpath matters

7/11 CP spoke to his report. Cuts to ROW work in Powys were not unduly severe, although ROWIP money from WAG had been reduced in 2011/12 from £250k to £120k. Members' responsibility for community councils had been reallocated. Further information about priority communities, past, present and proposed, would be circulated. **ACTION CP**

8/11 PCC ROW Committee had declined to add the Harley Valley route to the DM, on the grounds that the road defined in 1814 was never made up to the required width of 30ft. Ramblers London had agreed to appeal the decision, and a public inquiry will follow. CP would liaise with BS on publicity. CP/BS would also draw up a list of matters for discussion with PCC officers, including footbridge closures, the number of unconfirmed orders, pre-order consultations by agents acting on behalf of planning applicants, and notices prohibiting access in the Harley Valley. **ACTION CP/BS**

9/11 C Playford said that BBNP are to carry out a full review of ROWs in the Ystradfellte/waterfalls area, aimed at bringing the DM more into line with paths actually used. Any necessary orders would follow.

Access matters

10/11 AA would forward a report on Glastir to those interested. Although the scheme had been trimmed to make it more attractive to farmers at the expense of environmental content, RH confirmed that Glastir still required cross-compliance with the DM, and that it could potentially cover one third of Wales and open up/improve the ROW network by about 16%. **ACTION AA**

Rail Rambles

11/11 Marion Law's report indicated that Arriva Trains Wales were threatening to withdraw free passes to walk leaders after January 2012. This would undermine the whole scheme, even though the £9k generated by Rail Rambles in 2010 would have exceeded the cost of passes. If the threat materialised, it was AGREED that Powys Ramblers should get involved. In the meantime, AR would suggest to ML that funding could be sought from rail passenger associations, eg those covering the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines.

ACTION AR

Countryside matters

12/11 KJ reported that the Crown Commissioners have accepted development of a wind farm on Cilfaesty Hill (S of Kerry Hill), a Crown common (planning permission would still be necessary). It was noted that a demonstration will shortly be held at Nant y Moch in opposition to the proposed wind farm.

Planning matters

13/11 KJ would circulate information about current consultation on the Powys Local Development Plan, under which PCC are asking landowners to propose possible development sites. Land considered unsuitable for development could also be submitted. **ACTION KJ**

Group reports

14/11 DC and KJ reported on the activities of Four Wells and East Radnor Groups.

Welsh Council

15/11 The Council, on 2 April 2011, would be attended by AA, AR, CP and DC.

Any other business

16/11 AR drew attention to the 'Mystery Walkers' footpath survey, as detailed in the current issue of 'Walk' magazine and the Ramblers website. It was AGREED that there was no need to promote the scheme in Powys, given the degree of overlap with other similar surveys.

17/11 C Playford explained the current fencing situation affecting open land in BBNP. No fences had been removed since their erection at the time of the foot-and-mouth epidemic, and the NPA were ambivalent. It was AGREED that the fencing should be removed, despite the grazing benefits of its retention, and that a letter should go to the NPA and the LAF with the aim of resolving the current impasse.

ACTION C PLAYFORD

18/11 RH spoke about developments in Ramblers Cymru, in particular:

- the extent to which walking-related tourism is undervalued; it contributes far more to the Welsh economy than farming and fishing, and research to be published in April would quantify the matter;
- encouragement of WAG to put more resources into walking and footpaths, or at least to protect path work from cuts;
- possible schemes to get public contributions to particular footpath projects;
- proposed appointment of Ramblers Cymru 'community engagement officers', starting in south Wales;
- another two year post to help develop the Wales coast path; and
- around 20% of Ramblers members are now actively involved in some form of voluntary footpath work.

Date, time and venue of next meeting

19/11 It was AGREED, now that all Area Council members who regularly attend meetings are wholly or partly retired, that meetings would be held during the day in order to avoid long distance night driving. The matter would be kept under review. It was also AGREED that Newtown remains the most accessible venue.

The next meeting will be at 2.30pm on Thursday 9 June 2011 at Plas Dolerw, Newtown