

National Access Forum Written Contributions

NAFW 73: 22 November 2022

Introduction

This note is collated and edited by NRW from submissions from Forum members and NRW staff prior to National Access Forum Meetings to facilitate the sharing of information.

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British Horse Society:

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General interest

Horse park at Llandrindod Wells

The Society's Ride Out Fund has funded the creation of a horse park at Llandrindod Wells so that riders and carriage drivers who want to ride/carriage drive into Llandrindod Wells to undertake everyday tasks can do using their horses as their transport. The horse park enables them to leave their horse in the horse park (a corral with storage facility for tack etc) while they then walk into town to do shopping etc.

Policy and Legislation

Active Travel

Whilst horse riding is not specifically included in the definition of active travel, the British Horse Society is keen to encourage people to use their horses and dispense with car journeys where this is possible, and this is something the Society would like to see this increase, but for it to increase horse riders like walkers and cyclists need safe routes to use. A growing number of horse riders do use their horse to make every day journeys for everyday tasks, such as posting a letter, collecting a pint of milk, fetching the newspaper etc.

Another worrying trend for us is the increasing number of horse riders who historically have gone out for a hack direct from where they keep their horse, but are now having to box their horse up to access their nearest safe route to ride, thereby increasing motor journeys, because the roads they need to use to access those routes are no longer safe. Allowing horse riders to use active travel routes would help to turn the tide on this worrying trend.

Campaigns and Events

Dead Slow

The Society is delighted that the Welsh Government made the decision to agree and proceed with the Dead Slow temporary information placards to be placed in strategic hotspot positions.

The Society supported a Close Pass Operation in North Wales, where the police stopped all road users and talked to them about the highway code changes. They handed every driver the BHS Dead Slow cards with the 4 key messages on. This was well received as many were holiday makers from around the country, so reaching far and wide.

Ramblers Cymru:

Rebecca Brough Rebecca.Brough@ramblers.org.uk

General interest

Paths to Wellbeing

Our Pan-Wales *Paths to Wellbeing* project is continuing to deliver community engagement, training, and practical volunteering opportunities across 18 communities in Wales. External evaluation was built into the project. At the one-year point the evaluation is showing a positive impact on the wellbeing of participants. The delivery of community activities and the practical improvements to green spaces and routes is on course to exceed agreed targets. Work is ongoing to secure funding for the next phase of this work past the end of the current funding period (May 2023)



Policy and Legislation

Agriculture Bill and Sustainable Farming Scheme

We are actively inputting to the scrutiny and co-design processes for both the Agriculture Bill and the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Our main focus is to secure compliance with existing legal obligations as a part of the baseline for support under the new scheme.

Cross Party Group for the Outdoor Activity Sector in Wales

We are pleased to have been part of establishing this Cross-Party Group, and will be supporting with the secretariat duties over the coming year. Over the past year, it has been addressed by various Ministers, including the Climate Change Minister with whom we pressed the issue of Access Reforms and the potential to trial elements of shared use on government owned land. As of 10th November, the group is now chaired by Sam Rowlands MS and notes of its meeting to date can be found on the Senedd Website:

<https://business.senedd.wales/mgOutsideBodyDetails.aspx?ID=779>

Network Rail crossing closures

We are increasingly concerned at the inflexible approach of Network Rail to level crossings across Great Britain, including blanket closures with little consultation and unsuitable alternative routes.

We have challenged Network Rail at a number of public inquiries and court cases over recent years and are continuing to monitor and respond at a local level as needed. A recent example of this in Wales was at Deganwy, where Ramblers supported residents at a public inquiry (which found against Network Rail's assertion that a public right of way did not exist over the crossing) and subsequent High Court challenge (which Network Rail also lost). Following their failed legal appeal, Network Rail immediately sought to extinguish the rights of way – this was rejected by Conwy Council and subsequently by Welsh Government Ministers.

We would be interested to hear from other organisations on the National Access Forum about their experience of how Network Rail are approaching level crossing safety and closures (especially landowners)

Funding & Resources

New Walk Leader Training course

Ramblers has developed a new online course for people interested in developing skills as a walk leader.

It costs £35 and can be accessed here: <https://stride-ramblers.talentlms.com/index>

Campaigns and Events

Our Paths Our Future Campaign

Launched in July, we have been gathering pledges and support for increased funding and better monitoring of the condition of rights of way across Wales. The campaign will continue for the remainder of the year and pledges can be made online: <https://e-activist.com/page/108816/petition/1?locale=en-GB>

Natural Resources Wales

The People and Nature Survey for Wales (PaNS Wales):

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NRW, in partnership with Natural England, have commissioned Kantar to undertake a biennial population level survey to gather evidence and trend data relating to people's enjoyment, access, understanding of and attitudes to the natural environment, and its contributions to wellbeing. PaNS Wales is an online survey of 6,000 adults representative of the population of Wales. In addition a subset of respondents are asked a subset of questions about their oldest child (under 16). The PaNS Wales is a 'sister survey' to the PaNS England (which has been running since 2020).

The first fieldwork year for PaNS Wales was 2021/22 (April to end March) and we are about to receive our first full year data set. The PaNS Wales dataset is broad and covers:

- participation in recreational activity in green and natural spaces (including 'blue' space) and reasons for non-participation
- Activity type, duration, intensity, and location
- Regularity of visits to green and natural spaces
- Reasons for undertaking visit/activity and perceptions of benefits
- Spend
- Ownership and use of private green space (gardens)
- Pro-environmental/nature behaviours and attitudes
- Perceptions of the quality of green & natural spaces
- Modes of travel and transport and distance travelled
- Perceptions of wellbeing

One of the benefits of partnering with Natural England in the PaNS is that, for the first time, we will begin to build a picture of recreational activity in Wales undertaken by residents of England (and *vice versa*).

The PaNS Wales data is classified as Official Statistics and, once we are in receipt of the full data set, NRW will announce a publication date. Publication will be a minimum of three months after the announcement of publication. Official Statistics protocol means that no data will be available prior to this, but we will of course keep the NaFW updated on progress and are more than happy to provide a presentation of key results at the appropriate time.

If you have any questions please feel free to email me at the above address.

Recreation Strategy for the NRW Estate

NRW are in the very early stages of working on timelines, scope and approach to developing a recreation strategy for the NRW Estate. Work and engagement with stakeholders will formally begin from January 2023. Contact details will be confirmed and shared via the secretariat in the new year.

Countryside Code

As part of their Access Reform Programme, Welsh Government have directly funded a piece of work focussed on the future direction and promotion of the Countryside Code. NRW have commissioned work to start on the developing of a Strategic promotion plan & action plan which will set out the overall approach and objectives for promotion of the Code, how the Code is used by NRW and partners/stakeholders across Wales and outlining its medium to long term promotional activity. NRW are looking to set out ways to elevate the code and steer its direction over the next few years whilst continuing to work closely with Natural England. The work is commissioned to run until end of March 2023.

Snowdonia Active have been commissioned to carry out this work and are already auditing existing Code materials being utilised. They will also shortly be contacting a number of stakeholders/individuals, many of whom sit on NAFW, to discuss their past and future use of the Countryside Code and gather wider thoughts on how it could be promoted going forward.

Dr Emma Edwards-Jones is the lead contact for Snowdonia Active: emma@snowdonia-active.com if you wish to share any views on the promotional aspects of the Countryside Code. In the mean time, NRW will continue to update NAFW on progress.

Resilient Communities Grant Programme update

The Resilient Communities Grant Programme focuses on building resilient communities by increasing community participation in nature to increase health and wellbeing and resilience and will contribute to the current place-based resilient community related priorities identified in our Area Statements.

NRW received 210 applications, totalling over £20million, of which 21 were successful. Applicants have been notified whether or not they have been successful in obtaining

funding for their projects. Successful projects will be posted on our website when awards have been confirmed.

Further information: [Natural Resources Wales / Natural Resources Wales Resilient Communities Grant programme](#)

Forestry Standard review – second stakeholder consultation

The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) is the technical standard for sustainable forestry practice in the UK. It is reviewed every five years to ensure it remains up-to-date, balanced, and applicable across the UK.

A formal review was launched in February 2021 and the next edition is due for publication in spring 2023. This consultation, running until **8 December 2022**, seeks stakeholder views on a revised draft version. As the UKFS is a technical standard, the consultation is targeted at organisations that are familiar with its content and purpose, and not the general public. Organisations should respond directly to the consultation, not send their feedback to NRW.

Scottish Forestry is leading the consultation process, in accordance with a cross-border MoU on forestry functions. As such, a Welsh language version of the consultation document is not available. Information about the UKFS Review is available at Scottish Forestry - UK Forestry Standard [UK Forestry Standard: draft updated content - Scottish Government - Citizen Space \(consult.gov.scot\)](#)

Standards relating to public access are mainly referred to in section 7.2 (from page 86) UKFS Requirements for Forests and People.

Welsh Government: Designated Landscapes & Countryside Access Branch (DLCA)

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Ministerial change

DLCA policy responsibilities (with exception to National Park governance) has recently moved Ministerial portfolios from the Deputy Minister for Climate Change to the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd.

Access Reform

Whilst this work area is significantly resource constrained at present, there is a small amount of progress being made.

We are funding NRW during 2022-2023 to undertake further work in respect of dogs on leads and the countryside code.

- Dogs on leads - developing a Behavioural Insights based approach and associated activities to support NRW and WG in promoting responsible recreation with dogs in the countryside across varying types of access. It will identify how best to achieve positive behaviour change to reduce the incidences of livestock worrying (and events of disturbance to other vulnerable wildlife where recreation and conservation co-exist)
- Countryside Code - developing a strategic approach to promoting responsible recreation across Wales, looking at ways to influence visitors and users of the countryside to understand and follow the Countryside Code by means of promoting messages to desired target groups.

The WG is currently consulting on the **Statute law (Repeals) (Wales) Bill** which will repeal or disapply legislative provisions from across the statute book that are obsolete, spent, or are no longer of practical utility in relation to Wales.

The draft Bill amends sections 53, 54, 55 and 56 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, so those provisions apply to land in England only. This will mean that those provisions of the 2000 Act will not apply to Wales, and therefore there will not be a cut-off date by which historic footpaths and bridleways must be included on definitive maps, nor for the extinguishment of certain rights of way which have not been claimed by the cut-off date. This is the current position in law (as the 2000 Act provisions have not been commenced) and the change made by this Bill removes the prospect of the current position changing without new legislative provision being made.

The consultation is open until 6 January 2023 [Statute Law \(Repeals\) \(Wales\) Bill | GOV.WALES](#).

Welsh Ministers have approved an extension to the deadline for NRW to complete the next review of the open access maps required by the CROW Act 2000. The deadline date has been extended from 2024 to 2029. We are currently working on the legislative requirements to enact the recommended extension and are considering the recommendations of NRW's March report on continual review.

Access to water

DLCA are in discussions with the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd about this area, including meeting with the Chair of the NAFW (following the cancelled meeting with the Deputy Minister).

Sustainable Farming Scheme

The outline Sustainable Farming Scheme outline has been published. [Sustainable Farming Scheme | GOV.WALES](#)

Feedback must be submitted to sfs-codesign@gov.wales by **21 November 2022**

[Sustainable Farming Scheme: outline proposals for 2025: feedback form](#)

END.