



Minutes of Sixth Group Meeting 12th November, 2012 at Gilwern OEC, Abergavenny at 6.30pm

In Attendance

Adrian Thomas - ADE	Lee Cave - Longtown OEC
Andy Meek – Storey Arms OEC	Lee Lewis - Cardiff and Vale College
Ben Scholes – Kitlog.co.uk	Lisa Boore - Hampshire Mountain Centre
Carl Durham – Black Mountain Activities	Mark Soanes – Call of the Wild
Dan Thorne - Gwent OEC	Matt Perrott - Taff Valley Buggy Trails
Dave Thomas – Call of the Wild	Matt Rees – Dolygaer OEC
David Williams - Neath Port Talbot College	Matt Woodfield – Freelance
Gary Evans – Hawk Associates	Mick Collins - Outdoors@Hay
Gavin Clifford - Antur Ltd.	Mike Wright - Longtown OEC
Glynn Lewis - Bear Adventure / Coleg Gwent	Nick Bates - Llandysul Paddlers
Hopkin Smith - Taff Valley Buggy Trails	P Lillygreen - SDW. Senta
Huw Dullea - Treads and Trails	Paul Dann - FCW
Ian Kennet - Gwent OEC	Punch Maughan - BBT
Ieuan Starks - School Camp Ltd.	Rhydian Evans - Llandysul Paddlers
James Andrews - Coleg Gwent / Ebbw Vale	Richard Carpenter – Pendine OEC
James Morgan - Trewern OEC	Richard Hill - Glasbury House OEC
Jamie Ellson - Freelance	Richard Tyler - BBNPA
Jamie Simpson - Princess Trust	Riki Phillips - Mynydd Outdoor Adventure
Jeff Calligan – Mountain & River Activities	S Matthews - Royal Navy OLC
Jeff Ridd - Freelance	S Naylor - SDW. Senta
Jethro Moore – Adventure Beyond	Sean Taylor – Hereford Council
Joanne Nicholas - Merthyr CBC	Simon Ferguson – Pendine OEC
Joe Waters - RJC	Steve Roberts - Blue Mountain Activities
John Cliffe - AALS	Steven Thomas - Pendine OEC
Judith Harvey - BBNPA	Tim Jarvis - Coleg Gwent / Ebbw Vale
Juliet Parker-Smith – Trewern OEC	Tom Partridge – everything Outdoors
Keith Lee - Bikes and Hikes	Tony Rees – Welsh Adventures
Kevin Hannam-Bowen - Freelance	Will Kilner – South Wales MTA / Freelance

1. Welcome:

Andy Meek opened the meeting, SWOAPG Chairman, thanking everyone for attending. The chairman thanked Gilwern Outdoor Education Centre and Ian Kennet for hosting the meeting and also thanked Gary Evans for his hard work as Co-ordinator over the last two years and also prior to the formal position being created.

2. Apologies:

Alan Ward - Bigfoot Services Ltd. Aled Davies - Expeditions Wales Andy Cummings - Mazoku Andy Lamb - Wales Outdoors Ltd. Charlie Hammond - Coleg Sir Gar Cheri-Lee Birch - Fairbridge Cymru Chris Pierce – Woodlands OEC Dave Phillips - Swansea Youth Service David Windebank – Wye MTB Geoff Haden - Clyne Farm Centre Kevin Walker - Mountain Activities Lee Garbett - Quest Adventures	Martin Smith - Martins Walks Nick Fitzgerald - RJC Nigel Flude - The Links College Nigel Jones and Dean Jones- Adventures Wales Paul Donovan - WATO Paul Jackson - The Links College Paul Peet - Afan Valley MTB Hire Pete Blackburn - Plas Pencelli Peter Cole - Capital Region Tourism Phillip Clegg - Learn Outdoors Ross Hardy - Liquid Friction
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3. Update on Membership and SWOAPG Progress:

Tom presented the following summary.

SWOAPG Membership

Level 1 Members – 11
Level 2 Members – 76
Level 3 Members – 90
Associate Members – 11
Observers – 18
Clubs - 2
Total Joined – 208
Not Joined Yet – 37

Although this appears to be a larger number than before this is because we have been actively trying to increase membership of Mountain Bike Providers and Surfing Schools/Providers in the SWOAPG area. Steering Group are currently tasked with trying to encourage all remaining providers to join.

Update on Progress

- a) Tom introduced himself to those present as the newly appointed co-ordinator of the group, following selection of his tender for the role.
- b) The meeting at Gilwern was the 6th Full group meeting. The last full meeting was on the 7th March 2012 where we joined with POCG to hold our first South Wales Outdoor Conference in the Liberty Stadium in Swansea
- c) The www.swoapg.org.uk website has been launched and has a host of information on there including places to look for local jobs and courses being run plus news, events, alerts and membership information. Members are encouraged to use the site to gain updates and information regarding the group
- d) One of the first jobs Tom undertook as co-ordinator was to work with FCW to address the concerns around the safety and stability of the gully and abseil approach point on the main face at Dinas Rock. Members were reminded that they are currently requested not to use this approach point for abseiling on the main face until a way forward can be established with both FCW and SWOAPG.

- e) Tom informed those present that he had applied for grant funding to help with developing our Environmental Charter. If successful we will be looking at a range of ways of developing the charter and also improving the environmental condition of our many activity sites. Part of the grant funding was match funded against an up and coming volunteer day in the Mellte working in partnership with the BBNPA. Details of both the volunteering day on the 26th November and also the recently published Environmental charter can be found on the web site:
 Environmental Charter: <http://www.swoapg.org.uk/index.php/environmental-charter/>
 Volunteering Day: <http://www.swoapg.org.uk/index.php/event/swoapg-volunteering-day/?eID=81>
- f) We continue to represent our members at a number of local, regional and national level groups such as Wales Activity Tourism Organisation, Brecon Beacons Tourism, Sustainable Tourism Partnership, Valleys Regional Park, Regional Tourism Partnerships etc.
 A key meeting recently took place during the cross over in co-ordinators from Gary Evans to Tom Partridge and this was between the Environmental Minister in WAG, us, WATO and also the 2 other regional groups – Snowdonia Active and Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group. Gary explained that the meeting was looking at the possibility of WORN (Wales Outdoor Recreation Network) in relation to the new single body, which will consist of the FCW, CCW and Environment Agency. The meeting was felt to be a success and it was key to note that the minister appeared to support the ideas and also promote the fact that he would like to continue to see access for the outdoors.
- g) Gary continued to explain that in addition, SWOAPG had been included in the on going issues relating to the Blue Green Gym project set up by the VRP (Valleys Regional Park). Although it had been a time consuming and sometimes frustrating relationship it was noted to members that it was important that SWOAPG were able to be involved as there was a possibility that the BGG project could have been at a detriment to our members in terms of product displacement and activity duplication that would not benefit our membership.
- h) Tom updated those present regarding a recent CWW inspection of the Sychryd gorge where the condition of the SAC were monitored and recorded. CCW were pleased with the progress that had been made but we were reminded that we must continue to show improvement and that we will have our real test in the years to come in evidencing further improvements.
- i) The Late Booking System is now live. This system is there to be used under a set of specific situations and members have been sent full guidance on how to use the site and system. The link to the page is hidden from the main SWOAPG web site but can be accessed through www.l8bsw.org.uk where customers, providers, TIC's etc. can access duty provider details for the upcoming 3 week period.

Planned Action Moving Forward

- a) Gary Evans was called on to give a short update on the Big Pitch as this was an area being developed during his Co-ordinator time. He explained that although it was early days this was an exciting project using college students to come up with a marketing solution that may be of great use to activity providers. There will be an initial meeting at the end of November where we will be able to gain a full picture of exactly how this can work for our members and will keep them informed when necessary.
- b) Tom discussed the planned volunteering day pilot in the Mellte on the 26th November and explained it in a little more detail. If successful, it is hoped that these could form part of a quarterly programme where we work with key partners to volunteer member's time to improve the environmental condition of well-used activity areas/sites. Tom reminded all that the details are on the website and we really do need your support to make this a success.
- c) Although the initial problems raised by the National Trust over access for activity providers to their land/property have been diffused it is clear that there is still work to do in forming a working partnership with them. Juliet Parker-Smith has been heading up the efforts on behalf of the steering group and we are still keen to re-arrange a planned joint workshop with the National trust for 2013

- d) Tom reminded all that the 2011 mines and tunnel scheme administrated by the SWOAPG is due for revalidation and that he will be in touch with interested members in the new year to discuss the details
- e) This year a permit scheme was launched by Swansea Council to limit the surfing provisions at Caswel Bay. Both Gary Evans and Tom Partridge were involved in the initial meetings which resulted in SWOAPG members being able to purchase (for a nominal fee) daily permits to allow them to provide surfing activities on the beach. This agreement was set up to be reviewed annually and Tom will be looking into this in the new year
- f) Gary Evans has been working with the BBNPA to formalise a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the joint and partnership working that we do with the authority. With the understanding may also come the potential to access funding streams and sources and also secure and on-going relationship with the authority that has been so key to the success of the group from the offset.
- g) One of the Co-ordinator's roles is to continually maintain membership records and also ensure that new members are aware of the group and have the opportunity to join the group also. Tom will continue to keep this as a priority to ensure that the SWOAPG is representing as many Outdoor Providers in the area and those who use our area for activities.
- h) To secure the future of the group Tom must continue to look for further funding for the group as traditional funding routes may become limited in the coming years. This is key to the groups future and will maintain as a priority for the co-ordinator.

A chance for questions followed but there were none.

4. Reaching Out to Instructors:

Tom explained to those present that so far SWOAPG membership campaign has done very well to connect and communicate with centre managers, business owners, heads of centres and key senior staff in the 200+ organisations that form its membership. However, there is still concern that some key information is not always being passed down the line to those staff, instructors and freelancers that who are running the activities and using the venues for their work with groups/clients.

Tom explained that it will be a priority to now actively gather contact and communication information with as many outdoor staff, practitioners and instructors as possible and a range of ways were suggested:

Using the SWOAPG Facebook page: www.facebook.com/SWOAPG. From here the co-ordinator can also feed into the recently set up (and independent of SWOAPG) south wales instructors Facebook page. This currently has around 150 members, all of which have a connection with working in the outdoors in South Wales.

Collecting email and contact information from all attenders at events such as workshops, meetings, volunteering days etc.

Creating simple marketing information such as business cards and flyers linking people to the swoapg website and leave them at key places or on centre notice boards.

Explore using a wider range of social networking such as Twitter etc.

Instructors and Freelancers could join SWOAPG in their own right (not as part of an organisation)

Tom asked those present for their thoughts and comments:

- a) Judith Harvey (BBNPA) suggested that the volunteer wardens at Dinas Rock (and other key sites) could be used to help collect information/hand out information to instructors on site.
- b) Another suggestion was instead of trying to get hold of the instructors through emails etc. use better on site signage to portray the important message you are aiming to get across. This was discussed and although may work in some situations we, as a group, will have limitations on what we can place in terms of signage due to land ownership and also then promoting the wrong messages to the public.
- c) Tom could use the SWOAPG to repost tweets and feeds from other organisations on training and the likes to encourage more to look at the website/Facebook page
- d) Punch Maughan (BBT) suggested that, in her experience, using log in's on websites has not been successful and open access media (such as Facebook) has worked well

5. Access to Water:

Tom explained that although the planned passport scheme was planned to be in full operation by now there had been a hold up from within the legal departments in both DCWW and BBNPA and both SWOAPG steering group and Gez Richards within the BBNPA were pursuing this.

At present all previous access agreements have been removed and there is currently signage at the reservoirs planned for the scheme – Usk, Pontsticill, Pentwyn and Beacons. The signage and information would suggest that there is currently access and infrastructure is also installed to make this more straightforward.

All of the documentation and information has been drafted and ready to print and we will continue to keep members updated when this scheme does actually come online. As the scheme was initially planned for a years pilot it is unclear how this may effect the charges and the future of the scheme at present but Tom encouraged members to continue to be patient.

In addition Tom has been involved in discussions around access to Llyn Brienne under a similar scheme to the passport scheme. This will involve Camarthen CC and Llandysul paddlers and it was hoped that we could marry up the two schemes to operate as one with one charge. DCWW were not keen on the idea and Camarthen CC (who would be the issuing the permits) felt that it could be hard to work in conjunction with BBNPA in issuing permits for either or of the schemes. Tom also suggested that to add Llyn Brienne could delay our passport scheme further as the project here would still have to enter similar legal battles before being approved.

Tom reminded all that in both cases the initial plans were for this to be a pilot period where providers could evidence responsibility and respect for the agreements and water and that this may, in the future, lead to a reduction in charges, ownership of the permitting falling to SWOAPG and even additional reservoirs being added to the list of accessible water.

6. Merthyr Tourism Partnership – Joanne Nicholas, Business ICT Officer, Merthyr Tydfil CBC:

Joanne presented a short presentation to the group. This presentation can be downloaded by following this link:

http://www.swoapg.org.uk/files/3313/5309/1716/South_Wales_Outdoor_Activity_Providers_Group.pdf

The presentation included information on the development of Merthyr as a destination. Joanne included examples of the development plans and the key areas for this. These included areas known to activity providers such as: Dolygaer, Gethin Woods, Garwnant, Rock UK Summit Centre etc. Joanne was keen to involve the members of SWOAPG in working in partnership to the benefit of activity provision and business in the Merthyr area and inline with the destination development. She welcomed all members to contact her directly and be involved in relevant meetings and opportunities in the future.

Joanne's contact details are:

Joanne.nicholas@mertyr.gov.uk

01685 727089

07515190381

Tom will now receive relevant information from Joanne that he can pass on directly to our members and welcomed the partnership where there are clear benefits for new opportunities, development in existing provision and the potential creating and improving activity venues in the Merthyr area.

7. Dinas Rock – New Rules and Update:

Tom reminded the group that there had been a need to implement a set of rules that were previously represented as guidelines to address some of the key issues that pose a threat to our access at Dinas Rock for gorge walking.

Members have been sent the rules and these need to be adhered to ensure that we maintain access to the gorge. The pressure for action has come around from a number of factors such as pressure from the ever growing number of local residents who are currently unhappy with the behaviour and activity going on with their local community, damage to the environment and over use of the gorge plus other contributing factors such as overcrowding, litter, noise etc.

The rules are set to ensure that responsible conduct is taken by members in the following areas: Parking and Traffic, Changing, Use of Toilet Facilities and a broader range of topics including group size, use of other sites, litter etc.

Those present were reminded that there was a 2 strikes enforcement policy with the second strike resulting in FCW removing access agreements for the providers concerned. It was also pointed out that there is an appeals procedure and that this would be through Neil Stodart at the FCW.

It was felt that, at the last Steering Group meeting, that it should be noted that there are certain aspects of the rules that would be treated very seriously and classed as a major breach of the rules and warrant forcing action.

These were decided as:

No Nudity in any of the car parks:

This comment raised some comments from the group, largely around the concern that how can you classify nudity. Tom reminded all that this was to tackle the problems facing the local community as they are witnessing people getting changed/naked in front of houses, children's

parks and outdoor spaces and in front of other visitors. Paul Dann (FCW) also reminded the group that Dinas Rock car park is not a Beach. I.e. people do not go there expecting to see large amounts of people in towels, topless etc.

Some comments were passed about when the changing rooms are full or there is a group occupying them that make a visit to them in appropriate. These comments were explored and both Tom and Juliet Parker Smith (Steering Group) made the suggestions that if groups were showing the utmost efforts to apply the rules to their group control but safety would be a factor that they should consider alternative methods of protection. I.e. changing on the mini bus, blocking in the group from view with vehicles, using tarps/screens to protect from view. In these cases it would show that the organisation had shown the utmost attempt to abide by the rules and not a blatant flaunt of them.

Using abusive and/or offending language or behaviour towards members of the public/local residents:

This point was not commented on.

Parking in resident Parking Bays:

If a groups are found to be parking in the marked resident parking bays then this will warrant action if evidence is gained. It should be noted that the parking restriction relating to double yellow lines are the jurisdiction of the police and residents have been instructed to report number plates to the police in such cases.

Oversized Groups:

There was a comment from Hopkin Smith about why there was an enforcement on the numbers during quiet weeks. Tom reminded all that this was a response to not only the general and unpleasant overcrowding of the gorge and the area but also to reduce the environmental impact. By having less numbers during the week may not be a bad thing to be allowing the gorge to regenerate and recover from the busy weekends. Gary Evans also reminded the group that the number – 25 (not including instructors) was devised by the group at a previous meeting and the number had been raised rather than reduced from the initial suggestion on group size.

Breach of Access within the Gorge:

Groups found not using the agreed access points identified on the map. This point was also not commented on by the group.

The other aspects of the rules – Litter, noise, responsible parking in the car parks, car sharing, using alternative venues were stated could be dealt with through discussions and communication with the providers involved. However, it should be noted that continual and purposeful flaunt of these areas may result in action too.

The group asked Tom how these rules would be enforced. Tom stated that it was the responsibility of the landowner to act as 'policing' the rules however he urged providers to be proactive in encouraging other providers to work to these rules and if there was seen to be a purposeful flaunt of the rules then providers should act. If no action is taken there could be a real risk that all access could be lost somewhere down the line. The local community are quickly losing patience with the outdoor providers and they have also been instructed to gather information on providers acting irresponsibly or in breach of the rules. They have been given the co-ordinators details. There are also volunteer wardens in the car park who, although are not there to enforce rules, are aware of the situation and problems both local residents and compliant activity providers are facing.

If any members feel they need to talk to someone regarding another providers actions in the gorge they may decide to speak to the co-ordinator or Paul Dann – FCW.

8. Rural Alliances – Richard Tyler:

Richard Tyler was invited to update the group on the both Colabor8 (the funding source that initially helped to get the SWOAPG off the ground) and also the new Rural Alliances.

Richards's presentation can be downloaded by clicking the following link:

http://www.swoapg.org.uk/files/5813/5309/1511/swoapg_121112.pdf

Richard opened his presentation with a short statement on sustainable tourism and how important tourism was to rural communities. Richard helped to depict how wide an area the destination and its tourism is within the park and that all tourism development is both aimed at being sustainable and based on partnership working. In addition to this Richard highlighted the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and drew references and examples to the work in which we undertake in SWOAPG and also how we can link into the strategy.

To finish Richard summarised the key differences between the work that Collabor8 was set up to achieve and the development that will be continued, including the partnerships with other areas, regions and countries in Europe, through the Rural Alliances funding.

Questions: Do you see Gorge Walking as sustainable?

A: Yes, this is why we are so keen to produce codes of conduct, implement rules to protect the environments and also make an effort not to actively publicise gorge walking any more than is already being done so

Within the answering of this question a concern was raised over the reluctance to allow filming within the gorge (Dinas Rock). Judith Harvey (BBNPA) reminded the group that there was a set of guidelines and a process to be followed for the request to film and that one of the key reasons for the reluctance is often as the area does not need to be publicised any further than it already is.

Following on from this Judith also mentioned that if a recent request may have been turned down that there is a route to appeal.

9. Brecon Beacons Tourism – Punch Maughan:

Punch Maughan from BBT was invited to talk and update on matters of relevance to the SWOAPG. Punch gave a short presentation which can be downloaded by clicking the following link:

http://www.swoapg.org.uk/files/7413/5309/1788/BBT_update_for_SWOAPG_Nov_2012.pdf

Punch updated all on the new website that combines Place with Business. It was also pointed out that the National Park are removing all of their authority info from their online website and their Business and Visitor information is moving to the www.BreconBeacons.org site.

Punch then showed a series of slides to demo the new Destination Website for the BBNP. These highlighted the features and content of the site.

To finish, Punch reminded all members that it would be beneficial if visitors/customers who use the national park for their activities, holidays, visits etc. can be encouraged to go to:

www.breconbeaconssurvey.co.uk to complete the short questionnaire on their experience which in turn will help to highlight range valuable information for the national park as a destination.

Before Punch ended her presentation she also informed members that there was a planned “meet the providers” event planned for Spring 2013. This is aiming to include a trade day and a public day to increase marketing and networking opportunities between both the public and the trade sectors.

10. Mellte Update:

Tom relayed to the group that the survey work on the Mellte gorge was now complete and that there had been a series of visits being made to address the actions and concerns raised in the report. These were largely focused around a short but busy section of the gorge between Sgwyd Clun Gwyn, Sgwyd Isaf Clyn Gwyn and Sgwd Pannwr. It was highlighted that walkers, photographers, tourists etc. as well as gorge walkers are creating much of the erosion, path confusions and potential damage. Tom reminded the group how sensitive and important environmentally the Mellte is and that it is a considerable amount more fragile than the habitat found in the Sychryd.

Although no formal code of conduct or map has been produced yet work has started on these documents which will be produced by money from the BBNPA in the form of a folded down to A5 sized map, similar to the Waterfalls Area Maps.

Tom drew attention to some of the details that are very likely to appear in the code of conduct. These included:

- A no rope work policy in the Mellte and
- A no gorge walking in the Hepste ruling.

Tom also raised the potential problems with code of conduct training, as is required in the Sychryd Gorge, but commented on how he was exploring video resources and alternative methods of producing training materials for the instructors to be able to access. It is likely that all individual leaders/instructors using the gorge will have to attend the training and join SWOAPG. This is different to the Sychryd where it is the responsibility of the organisation to join and pass on the training information in house.

There were some comments raised:

Riki Philips was concerned that creating a code of conduct/map may draw attention to the gorge and it may well become more popular as it gains recognition. Tom and Gary reminded Riki that from the CCW point of view the project started with a potential ban on gorge walking all together so it was important to be going on this track to maintain access. It was felt that the very nature of the gorge and facilities (car parking, changing area, remoteness and technical nature) will still continue to be a natural limiting factor to the venue but CCW, FCW, BBNPA and SWOAPG will be monitoring the site closely for changes to the habitats, paths, condition of the gorge and also the knock on effect for the potential increase in demand on the venue.

Tom told the group that there was a plan to deal with the mapping and code of conduct (and related training) as a priority as Helen Pye who is supporting the project from the BBNPA and also FCW, CCW would like to formalise and implement on this ASAP.

11. Workshops 2013:

Tom gave a short summary of the workshops and their relative success's for the 2012 year. Once again the gorge walking and coastering workshops were well received but there were a number of workshops cancelled this year due to the lack of participants signing up. These workshops were part of a programme of workshops that was developed following member's guidance and feedback from the Outdoor Activity Conference in March 2012.

Tom asked the group what they would like to see in 2013 in terms of the future of workshops. There was only a small amount of feedback and this related to similar themes that have been known in previous years. These included consideration to peak and low seasons in activity

centres and provision and the time of the week the workshops are planned (i.e. weekday or weekend)

Gary Evans suggested we can use the poll section of the website to create a survey so that members can create a wish list of training to aid the co-coordinator with planning for 2013.

One member also asked if there was a demand for D of E assessor training in the area and if so should we organise a course. Tom stated that although the SWOAPG could help in promoting the course by advertising on the website the idea of the workshops was to address the topics, techniques and training that traditional and formal NGB style courses can not always meet.

ACTION: TP to create a poll on the website prior to planning 2013 programme

12. SWOAPG Priorities for 2013 – input from members:

Prior to the meeting members were asked to think about what they would like SWOAPG to focus on in 2013 and moving forward. Andy Meek took suggestions from those present:

- a) Members asked whether there is a current need to look at the access agreement at Llangatock. It was stated that this was an action still in progress from the previous co-ordinator but it was felt that there is not currently a need to prioritise the action as there has been little in the way of conflict here recently. It will stay on the action log and picked up by the co-ordinator when the appropriate time arises
- b) Ieuan Starks raised a concern regarding formal access and permission for group canoeing on canals and stated that although he wished to do things legitimately he did not want to antagonise a situation as there should currently be a charge for using the canals with groups in canoes/kayaks

ACTION: TP to investigate the concern with Gez Richards BBNPA and consider what may be the best strategy and approach to move forward with this point.

- c) There was a concern raised that the current Wye/Usk access agreement currently operating to grant access for canoeing and kayaking on popular sections of these rivers is under threat. It was suggested that SWOAPG should consider whether they could represent providers on the access panel to help influence access permission for activity providers

ACTION: TP to explore the concerns with the Wye/usk foundation and report back to steering group with a proposal from there.

- d) One member asked a question regarding the role of SWOAPG in replacing fixed aids and protection at the top of some of the popular climbing venues in the area. It was widely acknowledged that there could be element of liability if SWOAPG openly pledged to replace and install fixed protection at sites. There were comments made regarding the necessity of the fixed protection and that if a site would be unsafe/unusable if the fixed aids were not there then there could be a concern for the future of provision from that site. However, Tom stated that it would be likely that this could be more appropriately dealt with by involving the BMC and stating concerns to them or to address the problem themselves and remaining anonymous.

13. Steering Group Committee and Elections:

Andy Meek, Chairman, addressed the group and stated that there were currently 3 vacancies on the steering group. He reminded all that the role, as a steering group member requires commitment, a willing to attend meetings, read and respond to emails, support the co-ordinator and also represent the interests of the group as a whole.

Tom Partridge read out the 4 nominations that had been received prior to the meeting and as required in the information sent out to the full membership regarding the process of re-electing steering group members. The nominations were:

Gary Evans, Hawk Associates - nominated by Bill Beynon
Will Kilner, Freelance - self nomination
Gavin Clifford, Antur - self-nomination
Hopkin Smith, Taff Valley Buggy Trails - nominated by Lee Lewis and the Climbing Station

Each of the candidates were asked to present a short speech on why they are interested in being elected onto the steering group and summarise the key benefits they may be able to bring the committee and membership. Once this had taken place a set of voting strips were passed around the group to place their vote for the 3 places available.

These were collected and counted by steering group members and the results were announced. The votes resulted in **Gary Evans, Will Kilner and Hopkin Smith** being elected as the three new steering group members.

In a short separate meeting after the full meeting there was a vote for the position of chairman of the Steering Group. Matt Woodfield and Carl Durham nominated them selves as candidates for the role. They both left the room where the remaining steering group and co-ordinator voted, Matt Woodfield was elected as chair with a majority vote.

Matt Woodfield will now replace Andy Meek as Chairman for the SWOAPG. The website has been updated to represent this and the new steering group make up. www.swoapg.org.uk

14. AOB:

Tom pointed out to the group that he had brought along a range of merchandise from a DCWW campaign regarding reporting pollution in our watercourses. The material included samples of posters, flyers and contact cards. The group were informed that should they require any further information or products they should contact Louise Cole on the following email address:
Louise.Cole@dwrcymru.com

Finally, Tom also pointed out to members that Ben Scholes from www.kitlog.co.uk had set up a demo of his stores and equipment logging product at the rear of the room should any members be interested in finding out more and seeing kitlog in action.

15. Meeting Close:

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, thanked Gilwern OEC for the venue and the guest speakers.

The next full meeting will be in March / April 2012.