

# **Memormendum of Understanding (MOU) Access Concordat**

## **Waterfalls Country Activity Access Concordat between South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group and Natural Resources Wales.**

### **1. Introduction**

This Concordat aims to both safeguard the long term use of Waterfalls Country by South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group (SWOAPG) and balance its use with the wider environment, community and health and safety issues currently faced by the land manager, Natural Resources Body for Wales (NRW) on behalf of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE).

### **2. Access**

#### **2.1 To groups that have signed up to the Concordat via the SWOAPG, NRW will:**

- Allow access for non-commercial and educational outdoor activities in the Waterfalls area managed by NRW. Map of this area forms part of appendix 1.
- Permit access for agreed outdoor activities in the Waterfalls area (see appendix 1) to all affiliated commercial providers, provided that the use of the Mellte and Sychryd Gorge is carried out sensitively and that the gorge is not considered to be in a deteriorating condition by NRW Conservation Officers.
- Maintain car parking facilities in Dinas Rock Car Park.
- Maintain an outdoor changing area for groups subject to its appropriate use.
- Provide SWOAPG with an annual outline risk assessment for the inherent site features in April of each year.

#### **2.2 SWOAPG will:**

- Ensure that all members abide by the current Gorge Walking Code of Conduct (appendix 2) version 2 reviewed in 2011.
- Ensure that all staff who work in the gorge have been trained in its sensitivity and use the gorge walking access maps. (SWOAPG to define programme as required)
- Provide all members with a copy of the Dinas and Mellte Access Rules and update members on any changes. (appendix 5)
- Ensure that members use the Sychryd and Mellte Gorge in a sensitive manner and only use the designated least sensitive areas, and the marked access and egress points. These may change over time, and are shown in the Access Map and Code of Conduct poster version 2 reviewed in 2011.(Appendix 2)

- Ensure that all the members are registered to receive activity providers alerts sent by SWOAPG.
- In April every year provide a risk assessment for gorge users taking into account inherent site features and other users and agree site safety rules with NRW. Risk assessment to be sent to, Paul Dann, Natural Resources Wales, Llanfair Rd, Llandovery, SA20 0AL.
- Recognise that this land forms part of a working forest. Groups must be aware of all other users and must obey warning signs temporary or permanent.

### **3. Access Rules**

SWOAPG will work together with NRW to ensure members adhere to the Mellte and Dinas Access Rules 2015 (appendix 5)

#### **3.1 Both NRW and SWOAPG will work together with an Enforcement policy:**

Should a provider break any of the rules and there is no doubt about who they are, then:

- First transgression of the calendar year – NRW will write to the provider with a warning that they are known to have broken the rules and should take steps to prevent this from happening again.
- Second transgression of the calendar year – NRW will contact the provider and inform them that they will need to submit an improvement plan within 14 days if they wish to continue to use the gorge under the Concordat.
- Third transgression of the calendar year – SWOAPG will no longer recognise the provider as signed up to the Concordat and will inform NRW of this. NRW will send the provider details of the alternative access arrangement for use of the gorge outside of the Concordat. This is currently the Mynediad events and permission system administered by NRW.

### **4. Status**

- 4.1 NRW, as a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, is accountable to Ministers and the Welsh Government, as set out in the Establishment Order for the Body and the agreed Governance Framework. The parties recognise that any relevant requirements in these governance arrangements take precedence over this Memorandum.
- 4.2 The parties agree that this Memorandum is not legally binding between them and does not create any form of partnership or legal rights or obligations. It is however a statement of their shared intention to work together in a spirit of co-operation in pursuance of the matters outlined above.
- 4.3 Nothing in this Memorandum of Understanding shall fetter the discretion of NRW and its duties to be impartial, fair to all affected persons and to exercise (and be seen to exercise) its functions in accordance with the requirements of relevant legislation at all times. Accordingly, nothing in this Memorandum is to be taken as limiting or affecting in any way NRW's exercise of its powers and duties.

## 5. Review and consult

Both NRW and SWOAPG will:

Hold a biennial review of the Concordat to promote understanding and raise awareness of either organisations' issues. The agenda for the meeting is outlined in appendix 3.

Consult with each other about developments with potential impact on either organisations' interests.

### 5.1 Accident reporting

Both NRW / SWOAPG members have joint responsibility for recording and investigating all serious/major accidents and incidents within the gorges of which they become aware or are made aware involving users of the gorges. (see appendix 4 for full details)

## 6. Implementation

- No action from this Concordat will override the statutory duties and responsibilities of either organisation.
- SWOAPG will ensure gorge using members maintain at least £5 million of public liability insurance.
- SWOAPG will annually provide details of all gorge using members to NRW at, Natural Resources Wales, Llanfair Rd, Llandovery, SA20 0AL.

The Concordat will be reviewed at least biennially, with the third review to have taken place by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

Dated: 7 February 2017


Signed by:

Natural Resources Wales:

Executive Director of South Wales Operations: 

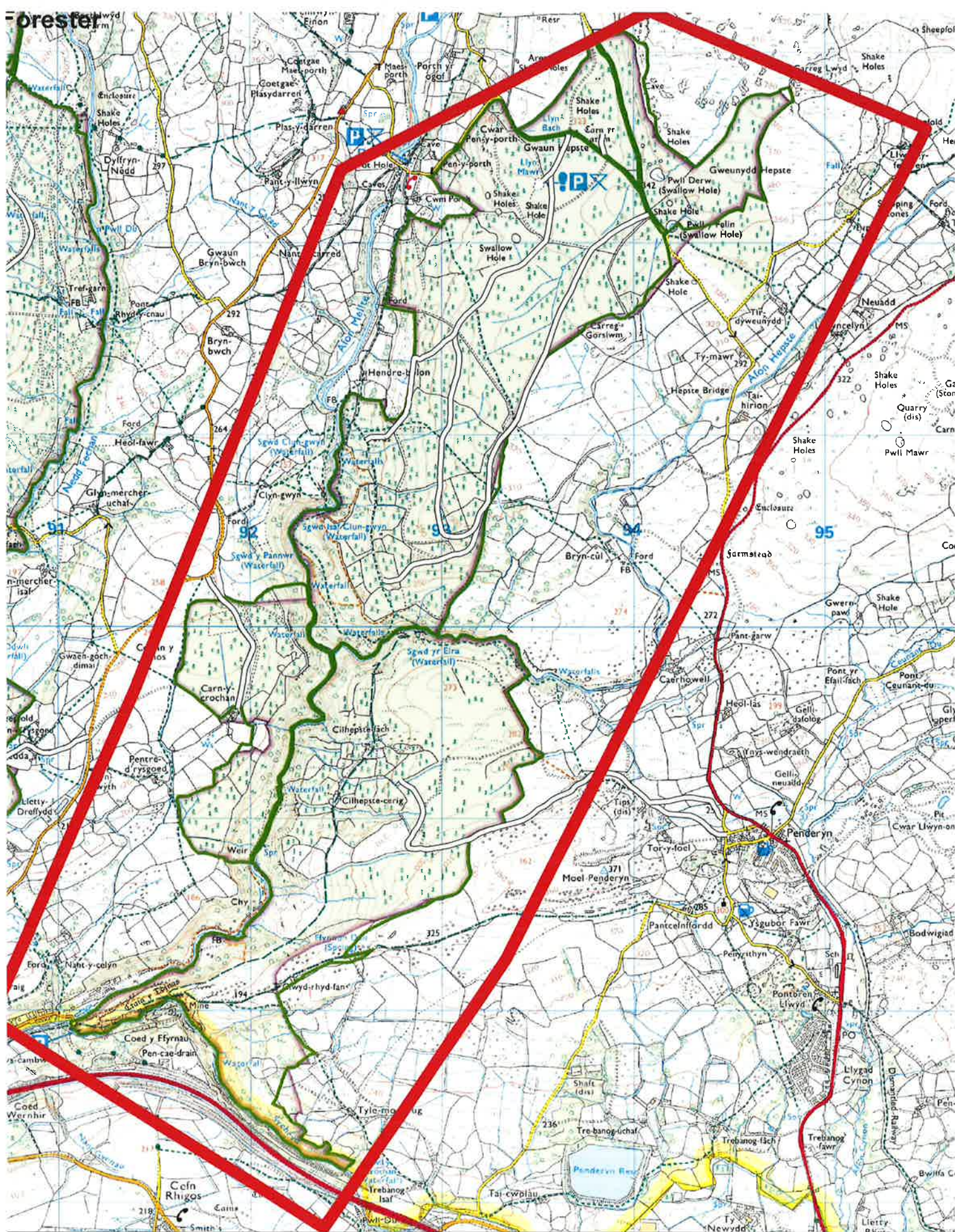
South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group:

  
..... Matt Woodfield..... SWOAPG Co-ordinator

  
..... Nick Winder..... SWOAPG Chairman

## Appendix 1





Presteigne District - Llanymddyfri  
 Title - Concordat area  
 Type of Map -  
 Scale - 1:25,000  
 Date: 31/01/2017

## Legend

 Management Area



Concordat area onn NRW managed land edged Green

 Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru  
 Natural Resources Wales

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru  
 PSMA Rhif y Trywydd - 100019741  
 Natural Resources Wales  
 PSMA Licence Number - 100019741



## Appendix 2



Cyfoeth  
Naturiol  
Cymru  
Natural  
Resources  
Wales

# Gorge Walking in Waterfall Country



## Mellte Gorge

### The Mellte Gorge – one of a kind

The woodland habitats in the Waterfalls area, including those along the Mellte, are of European importance. The steep valley sides in the Mellte Gorge trap humidity and produce ideal conditions for lower plants, including mosses and liverworts that are scarce or rare in Britain and Europe. The valley's ancient woodland is one of the 10 richest in Wales for humidity-demanding lower plants. These plants grow on rocks, tree trunks, logs and the woodland floor, so care is needed to avoid damaging them. Amongst these is Autumn Flapwort, which colonises fallen and standing trees and sometimes rocks in very humid places. The gorge is also important for other plants such as ferns, including delicate 'Filmy Ferns', uncommon Hawkweeds which grow in rock crevices and Marsh Hawk's-beard, which grows on damp banks by the river.

### Gorge Walking Code of Conduct

Following this code will minimise environmental disturbance within this protected site.

#### Brief your groups

- When participants understand the fragile nature and protected status of the gorge, damage can be avoided as individuals assume a personal responsibility for protecting the area.
- Be sure to brief every group, including any parents, teachers or observers not actively participating.
- The Countryside Council for Wales has produced a short DVD on gorge walking; if possible offer your group the chance to see it before visiting the area.

#### Keep to footpaths and the agreed access points and routes as shown on the map.

- The agreed access routes and access points can accommodate groups of different abilities, and also take account of different water levels - high and low.
- Ensure you know which access point to use and avoid using any that are not shown on the map.
- Do not create new routes and access points.
- Groups should follow unsurfaced paths in single file to avoid widening pathways.

#### Stay in the watercourse

- By keeping in the water flow you will ensure that you and your group are doing least damage. However, avoid moss / vegetation-covered rocks, boulders and tree bases within and by rivers, or any vegetation away from agreed routes and access points.
- Keep away from the marked sensitive areas (red hatching).
- The entire gorge environment is very sensitive to disturbance and continued use of some areas prevents recovery. This is why most of the gorge is marked on the map as sensitive. Avoid conducting activities, group briefings and breaks in these sensitive areas. Break stops and group briefings can be particularly damaging as it concentrates damage from feet into one area. Therefore please conduct briefings in the car park.







## Gorge Walking in Waterfall Country

Waterfall Country has become an increasingly popular place to visit over recent years. This has resulted in much wear and tear to the natural fabric of the woodlands, waterfalls and gorges. Gorge walking is mostly undertaken away from the footpaths and therefore adds significant pressure on the wildlife of the area. A programme of footpath repairs is helping with erosion but the **Code of Conduct** overleaf addresses the impacts of gorge walking in the Mellte area.

This code of conduct, along with the related training and resources, is in place to ensure that providers of adventurous activities within the Mellte Gorge are using the site in the most environmentally sustainable way.

### In order to use the Mellte gorge for gorge-walking and all other adventurous activities you must:

- be leading on behalf of a SWOAPG member organisation or join as an individual member.
- all leaders must attend training on the Mellte Code of Conduct.
- be signed up to the Concordat (see below).
- adhere to the Code of Conduct (see overleaf).
- adhere to the maximum daily group size limits (see FAQ below).

Gorge Users not having taken these steps will not have permission to use the site and may therefore find their insurance is invalidated.

### Please also note the following:

- Planned Rope-work, such as Abseiling, Tyrolean Crossings, is not permitted in the gorge.
- The Nedd-fechan, Hepste and Pyrdin are strictly out of bounds for adventurous activities.
- Organisations delivering Gorge Walking in the River Mellte must also hold a current AALA License covering Gorge Walking at this site, hold an equivalent inspection scheme License, such as Adventuremark, or have been observed using the site in an appropriate and safe manner by an independent Technical Advisor selected by NRW (Natural Resources Wales) and BBNA - the majority landowners.

For further details see [www.swoapg.org.uk](http://www.swoapg.org.uk) or email [swoapg@gmail.com](mailto:swoapg@gmail.com)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who owns the land in and around the Mellte gorge?

The National Park Authority owns the land on the western bank of the Mellte from the bridge above Sgwd Clun-Gwyn down to Sgwd y Pannwr. The majority of the remaining land is owned by NRW.

### What are my access rights in relation to leading gorge-walking groups?

While much of the site is designated Open Access land, this only allows for general public access on foot, not commercial or otherwise organised activities. Private land may not be fenced or marked but there is no right of access to these areas. Organised groups can gain permission to operate in the area from NRW and BBNA through agreement with the Waterfalls Area Activity Concordat.

### What happens if I don't adhere to the concordat and code of conduct?

The law treats damage to Sites of Special Scientific Interest seriously. Third parties may be liable of fines (of up to £20,000) if they knowingly, intentionally or recklessly damage the special features of SSSI. Owners and occupiers may be subject to similar fines if they do not consult NRW about their intention to undertake activities that result in damage to the special features.

### How will the code of conduct and concordat be enforced?

In order for the Mellte gorge to remain open for gorge-walking activities the site must show improvement, therefore we hope that the code and concordat will be largely self-policing.

### What are the daily limits on group size?

Maximum group size (excluding instructors) is 16. The maximum daily limit for any one business is 48.

### When using Loonies Leap area which code of conduct applies?

Those starting their gorge-walking day at Clun Gwyn should adhere to the Mellte code whilst groups starting their day at Craig y Ddinas should adhere to the Sychryd code.

## SWOAPG South Wales Environmental Charter

### What is the Environmental Charter?

The Environmental charter is a commitment from activity and education centres for the sustainable use of the Brecon Beacons National Park and SWOAPG South Wales operating area. All members of SWOAPG make this commitment and work with Landowners and Environmental Organisations to keep the Charter relevant and effective in conserving all the outdoor venues they use.

Most of the areas we use as providers are privately owned, and the SWOAPG Environmental Charter encourages groups to show respect and consideration for local residents and other users, as well as citizenship, to the activity sites that are visited.

### SWOAPG Members:

- Recognise that their use of the natural environment carries with it a responsibility to encourage those in their care to learn something of the countryside's special qualities and the ways in which it can be looked after.
- Make a commitment to good practice for the sustainable use of the countryside.
- Always carry out activities in a manner which maintains good relationships.

### As associate members of SWOAPG, the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Natural Resources Wales:

- Recognise that support, care and enthusiasm for the Brecon Beacons National Park and South Wales Outdoor Recreation venues can be generated by outdoor activities, undertaken within the terms of this Environmental Charter.
- Will consent with members of the Environmental Charter Group over the management and policy development on all issues, within the framework of this Charter.

## The Concordat

Organised groups can gain permission to operate in the area from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNA) through agreement with the Waterfalls Area Activity Concordat.

As much of the area in and around the gorges is legally protected for the high quality and rarity of its habitats, activity groups must follow a simple Code of Conduct to minimise the environmental impact of a visit. Compliance with the Code is a requirement of being permitted to access the site.

This Concordat and the accompanying Code of Conduct and guidelines were developed between representatives of Outdoor Activity Providers and BBNA and NRW working collaboratively.

Outdoor Providers wishing to use the Mellte for Gorge Walking are required to first join SWOAPG, then attend the Code of Conduct training and finally sign-up to the Concordat to enable them to use the site with Landowner permission. If you are already signed up to the Concordat as a result of the Sychryd Code then you will just need to attend Code of Conduct training for the Mellte.

This agreement and collaborative approach to environmentally sustainable use of a SSSI and SAC by Activity Providers is unique in the UK and is a template for what can be achieved by working together.



For more information, please visit the National Park Authority & Fforest Fawr Geopark websites:

[www.breconbeacons.org](http://www.breconbeacons.org) [www.fforestfawrgeopark.org.uk](http://www.fforestfawrgeopark.org.uk)





## Sychryd Gorge



### Protected Wildlife Habitats

The woodlands and geology here are of great significance nationally and internationally. They are protected by being designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under UK law whilst the woodlands have also been designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under European law.

The land in the SSSI and SAC is owned by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA), Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) and several private land owners. BBNPA and FCW are keen that people visit, enjoy and understand this special place but they also have a legal responsibility to conserve it and ensure that it continues to be available for future generations to enjoy.

Activity groups entering the area are also bound by the conservation legislation and this code will help you comply with that law.

### Access

On the map overhead there is no public access to the land under private ownership except on the path marked on the A169 Melite northern section. Other parts of the area have been dedicated as Open Access land for the purpose of public access on foot (not including commercial activities), but it should be noted that if SSSIs become degraded as a result of Open Access activities, closures can be introduced to prevent further damage and to allow sites to recover.

### Code of Conduct

The South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group, BBNPA, FCW and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) are working together to minimise the impact of gorge walking whilst still allowing it to continue. It has been agreed that gorge walking should be focused in the Craig y Dolinas/A169 Sychryd area and the Code of Conduct shown overhead aims to minimise the impact of the activity and allow damaged areas to recover. Monitoring will be put in place to measure the effectiveness of this code.



**Rhytidolepis submarginatus**

(Source: iNaturalist)  
Waterfall Country is the British stronghold for this nationally rare species. It tends to grow in vulnerable places such as just above the floodzone by rivers and by footpaths.



**Trametes filum-firmum**  
(iNaturalist)  
A scarce, fragile species found only in the most humid sites. It is particularly vulnerable to damage through desiccation.



**Dermatozoon minutum**  
is a scarce species of lichen that grows on limestone rocks and is easily dislodged.

## Gorge Walking in Waterfall Country



Waterfall Country has become an increasingly popular place to visit over recent years. This has resulted in much wear and tear to the natural fabric of the woodlands, waterfalls and gorges. Gorge walking is mostly undertaken away from the footpaths and therefore adds significant pressure on the wildlife of the area. A programme of footpath repairs is helping with erosion but the Code of Conduct overhead addresses the impacts of gorge walking in the Craig y Dolinas/A169 Sychryd area.

This poster will help leaders:

Plan activities by showing the parts of the area in which gorge walking is allowed.

Brief groups about the environmental sensitivities.

Minimise the impact on wildlife, habitats and geology, and to allow damaged areas to be restored.

### Gorge Walking & Wildlife

The rare plants that grow on river banks, rocky outcrops, boulders, trees and fallen logs throughout the gorge and river channel, cannot cope with being regularly trampled or dislodged by passing feet, hands and trailing ropes. So-called Dry Gorge Walking can be particularly damaging as walkers go from rock to rock.

In the woodlands, pressure from gorge walking groups (as well as the general public) can damage vegetation and prevent it recovering, eventually resulting in soil erosion. If bare rock is exposed, then the woodland may lose its ability to regenerate. Therefore group management in the woodlands, particularly when accessing the gorge, needs to be carefully planned and executed. If managed responsibly however, further damage can be avoided and habitat that has already been affected can be restored to its former glory. The map overhead gives details of the access/egress routes that have been agreed - Please help protect the area by avoiding other paths.

For more information, please visit the National Park Authority & Forest Fawr Geopark websites:

[www.breconbeacons.org/environment/waterfall-country](http://www.breconbeacons.org/environment/waterfall-country)

[www.forestfawrgeopark.org.uk](http://www.forestfawrgeopark.org.uk)



**Leptodermis capreastris**

(iNaturalist)  
This uncommon species is at the southern edge of its British range in Waterfall Country.



**Mosses, Liverworts, Ferns and Lichens**

Mosses and liverworts are found in the woodland floor and are important for a range of invertebrates, including beetles and fungi. The bog is a red color due to the abundance of the bog burn.



**Oak woods with the ferns and the common yellow flowers of the Cow-wheat (Melampyrum pratense).**

### Wildlife & Geology

Waterfall Country lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park where the Noddi Pheasant, Noddi, Sychryd, Melite and Heptre rivers drain the upland areas of Forest Fawr and Manor Fawr. The effects of geological activity and erosion have created steep-sided river gorges and a series of wonderful waterfalls. These processes are still active, continuing to slowly change the position of rocks and cliff faces and the river valleys.

Oak, ash, hazel and alder woodland has developed along these gorges. Due to the difficult nature of the terrain, this has remained largely untouched and now supports some of the country's best ancient and unmanaged woodland.

Uncommon plants occur throughout the site, often in situations that are vulnerable to trampling such as on riverbanks, rocks and in seepages. Several geological features of national and international importance are also present and all these can be damaged by recreational pressure.

### Mosses, Liverworts, Ferns and Lichens

Steep gorges a long history of tree cover and geographic location combine to form a sheltered, humid environment that is ideal for some of our simpler and most ancient plants. Different substrates and aspects allow a wide range of species to find a home, whatever their individual requirements.

Some of the species found here are restricted to just one or two rock exposures, a rotting log, an oak trunk or are found over just a small area of woodland floor. Others grow on rocks and boulders both within and on the edges of the water courses. A number only exist at a handful of sites in Wales and the UK, or are right at the edge of their geographical range.

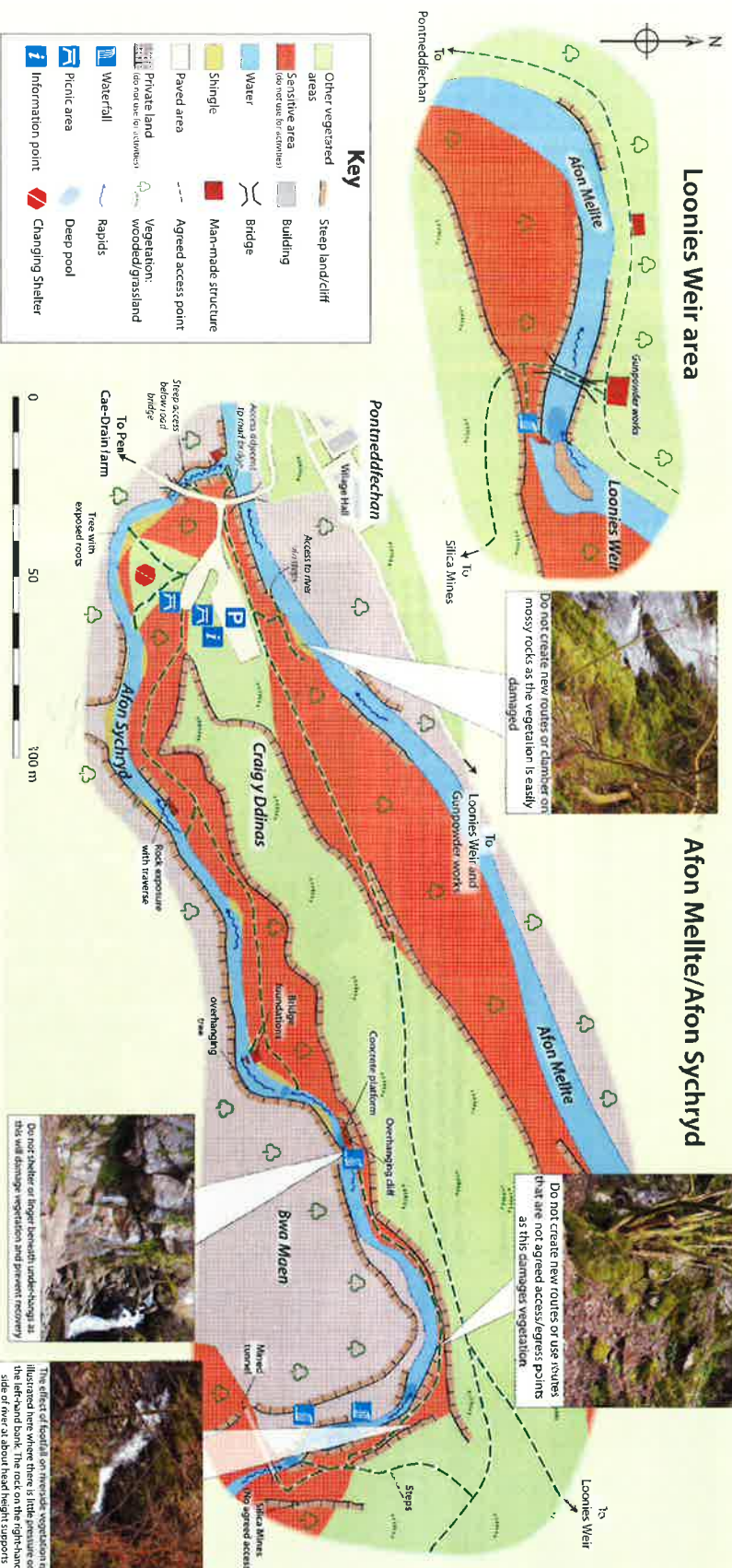
The life history of many of these plants is not well understood - many appear to grow slowly or have a poor ability to reproduce. They therefore can be slow to recover from damage and can be vulnerable to local extinction.



# PARC CENEDLAETHOL BANNNAU BRYCHEINIOG

## Access Map and Code of Conduct – Craig y Ddinas/Afon Sychryd Gorge

The Afon Sychryd gorge is part of the Coedydd Nedd a Melte Special Area of Conservation a legally protected site under European law because of its high nature conservation value



### This map is to be used to:

- minimise environmental disturbance within the Craig y Ddinas/Afon Sychryd by following the agreed Code of Conduct and keeping to agreed access routes/points.

### This map is for the use of:

- Activity providers who have signed up to the Concordat between the South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group and Forestry Commission Wales.

### The Concordat and Code of Conduct is required:

- to ensure that providers and landowners comply with environmental legislation
- for providers to gain permission to enter FCW land for gorge walking

This Concordat governs access for agreed outdoor activities in Waterfall Country. Any provider not signed up to the Concordat does not have FCW permission to access their land. For details on how to sign up see the BBNPA website [www.breconbeacons.org/environment/waterfall-country](http://www.breconbeacons.org/environment/waterfall-country) or enter Gorge Walking into the Search box.

### Gorge Walking Code of Conduct

Following this code will minimise environmental disturbance within this protected site.

#### Brief your groups

When participants understand the fragile nature and protected status of the gorge, damage can be avoided as individuals assume a personal responsibility for protecting the area. Be sure to brief every group, including any parents, teachers or observers not actively participating. The Countryside Council for Wales has produced a short DVD on gorge walking; if possible offer your group the chance to see it before visiting the area.

#### Keep to footpaths and the agreed access points and routes as shown on the map

The agreed access routes and access points can accommodate groups of different abilities, and also take account of different water levels - high and low. Ensure you know which access point to use and avoid using any that are not shown on the map. Do not create new routes and access points. Groups should follow unsurfaced paths in single file to avoid widening pathways.

#### Stay in the watercourse

By keeping in the water flow you will ensure that you and your group are doing least damage. However, avoid moss/vegetation-covered rocks, boulders and tree bases within and by rivers, or any vegetation away from agreed routes and access points.

#### Avoid the marked sensitive areas (red hashing) for activities and stops

The entire gorge environment is very sensitive to disturbance and continued use of some areas prevents recovery. This is why most of the gorge is marked on the map as sensitive. Avoid conducting activities, group briefings and breaks in these sensitive areas. Break stops and group briefings can be particularly damaging as it concentrates damage from feet into one area. Therefore please conduct briefings in the car park.

# BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK



## **Appendix 3 Example Agenda for Liaison Meetings between NRW and SWOAPG**

### **Agenda**

NRW and SWOAPG Gorge use Concordat Liaison Meeting

Meeting: meeting number & Date

Location:

Present:

Apologies

### **Items**

#### **Health and Safety**

- 1.1 Items actioned / implemented since last meeting.
- 1.2 Items outstanding
- 1.3 Accidents and Near Misses
- 1.4 Review of accident reporting regime

#### **2. Inspections**

- 2.1 Trail inspections and reports
    - work completed and outstanding
  - 2.2 Car Park Inspection Reports
    - work completed and outstanding.
  - 2.3 Condition of the Gorge habitat /ecosystem
3. Access Issues
- 3.1 Gorge access issues
4. Agree H&S meeting dates.
5. AOB

## Appendix 4.

### Accident reporting

NRW/ SWOAPG members have joint responsibility for recording and investigating all serious/major accidents and incidents within the gorges of which they become aware or are made aware involving users of the gorges.

The essential points to record are:

- Where did it happen?
- What happened?
- Who did it happen to?
- What was the nature of the accident?
- Was it reportable under RIDDOR (Reporting Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences).

Both parties will input into WASAG (Waterfalls Area Safety Advisory Group) which also has Emergency Services, including Mountain Rescue and Cave Rescue as members. SWOAPG and NRW will work with the partner organisations to pass on relevant information to emergency services.

Both parties will retain an identical up to date master copy of the gorge network, key access points and other relevant information. These maps will be accessible and easy to locate by all members of NRW Llandovery staff and members of SWOAPG, and will be updated at annual review meetings.

Any serious/major incident involving customers, during SWOAPG group led activities must be investigated by SWOAPG within a period of 7 days from the date of the incident and a copy of the report sent to NRW. The



review of the incident should identify the immediate, underlying and root cause of any incident.

Any accident occurring during an NRW permitted event (excluding any SWOAPG organised events) will be investigated by NRW.

SWOAPG agrees to inform NRW, within 7 days, of any serious/major incidents that they are aware of within the normal operation of the gorges. NRW will then decide if its own Serious Incident Review (S.I.R) investigation is merited.

Each party will record all incidents of which it becomes aware or is made aware of that it attends and the response made to an incident and must provide the other party with a copy of the report prepared on an incident as soon as practicable after the incident, where the incident involves a serious injury or a fatality. Less serious incidents will be discussed at the annual communication meeting and at WASAG meetings.

**All recorded incidents which involved a serious injury or a fatality** will be reviewed together with the response to each compiled and implemented.

### **Responsibilities under RIDDOR.**

Both parties have responsibility for compliance with all aspects of RIDDOR legislation, further details are available from HSE.

## Appendix 5





## Mellte River Gorge Access Rules for Outdoor Activity Providers

As the demand on our natural resources grows with the increasing demand for adrenaline, adventure and educational activities, we find ourselves as activity providers, to be both re-active and pro-active to the situation we face in our river gorges in South Wales.

The Mellte is one of the most environmentally sensitive places in South Wales due to its diverse micro-climate and the richness of the eco-systems within it. In addition, the extreme beauty, remoteness and scenery of the area makes this very popular with visitors, hill walkers, photographers and a range of outdoor enthusiasts.

Although this area is less populated and it would appear that the presence of a local community is not as prevalent as at Dinas Rock, we do still need to be very mindful of our impact on the local residents, shops and landowners in the area and also on the members of the public who come to this area to experience the wildlife, scenery and waterfalls.

In line with the access requirements for Dinas Rock and the Sychryd Gorge, we have put in place a Code of Conduct for the Mellte River, specific training requirements for leaders and also a set of rules to follow to ensure that activity providers work in a sustainable way to both preserve our natural resources and also meet the business / educational needs of our providers

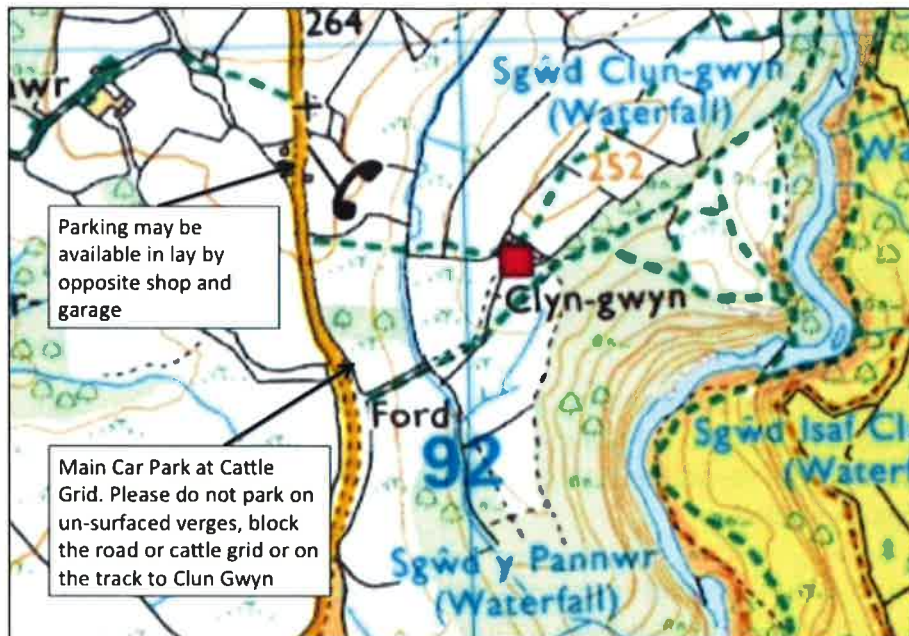
This set of rules is for the River Mellte from the upstream footbridge at Clun Gwyn to the confluence with the Sychryd at Dinas Rock. Where groups are undertaking a full descent of the river to finish at Dinas Rock, then the access rules, code of conduct and related training need to be adhered to.

### 1. Parking & Traffic

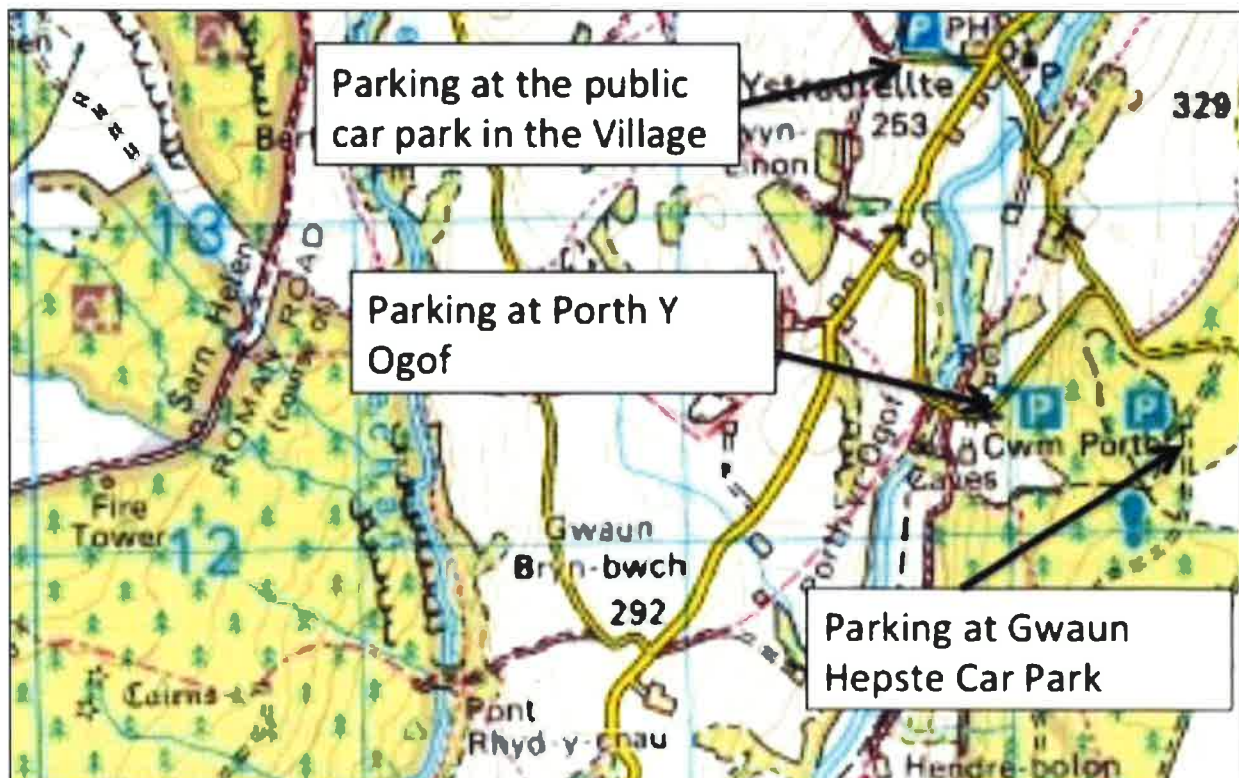
- a. **Avoid irresponsible parking** at all times. – Parking spaces at Clun Gwyn Cattle Grid are limited and will be especially busy on weekends and summer months.
- b. **No parking on double yellow lines or on un-surfaced verges**

**For groups undertaking a full descent of the river to finish in the Dinas Rock area please also adhere to the Rules for Dinas Area**

## Suggested Parking



## Suggested Alternative Parking



For groups undertaking a full descent of the river to finish in the Dinas Rock area please also adhere to the Rules for Dinas Area 2



## 2. Changing

- a. In the Clun Gwyn car park, ensure your groups change sensitively using vehicles or shelters to change behind. Please remember that visitors to the site do not expect to see public nudity. Where possible arrive at the site already changed or use the **Changing Screens** in Porth Yr Ogof car park or the Dell next to the main car park at Dinas Rock.
- b. In the Village Hall car park, **no changing is permitted**. Either use the Village Hall for changing or send your group to the changing screens in the Dinas Rock Main Car Park.
- c. **Avoid changing in front of the shop and residents houses at all times**
- d. **Brief groups properly** to ensure changing takes place in designated places at all times

## 3. Toilets

- a. Do not use the car parks as toilets. Use toilet facilities at Porth Yr Ogof, The Angel Inn **Public Toilets** or book the **Village Hall** to use all their facilities

## 4. Numbers

- a. **Maximum Numbers** – The maximum group size is 16 plus staff with a maximum total number per organisation per day of 48 plus staff

The numbers and group sizes will be reviewed on an annual basis allowing/utilizing data gathered from monitoring points on the site to inform decision making. Monitoring points will be established in areas that are of concern to CCW. It is therefore essential that the gorge-walking code be followed so that the environmental condition of the site is improved.

## 5. Other

- a. keep **noise levels to a minimum** and avoid bad language. Remember that noise carries in these areas and this is an area of beauty enjoyed by many people including families and children.
- b. **No Litter** - pick up yours and any other litter you find. Take all rubbish (and clothing) home with you.
- c. **Check all of the car parks and changing areas** for litter and forgotten equipment once your Group has finished changing. Carrying black bags and protective gloves will help with this.

**For groups undertaking a full descent of the river to finish in the Dinas Rock area please also adhere to the Rules for Dinas Area** 3

Should a Provider break any of the rules and there is no doubt about who they are, then:

First Transgression of the year –

NRW will write to the provider with a warning that they are known to have broken the rules and should take steps to prevent this from happening again.

Second Transgression of the Year-

NRW will contact the provider and inform them that they will need to submit an improvement plan within 14 days if they wish to continue to use the gorge under the concordat.

Third transgression of the year –

SWOAPG will no longer recognise the provider as signed up to the concordat and will inform NRW of this. NRW will send the provider details of the alternative access arrangement for use of the gorge outside of the concordat.

### **Advice**

The main Clun Gwyn car park is nearly always full after 11.00am on a summer weekend. If arriving after 11.00, **consider another venue** or drop your group off and park the vehicle at one of the suggested alternative parking areas.

Arrange a **meeting place** for Gorge Clients and then bring the minimum vehicles to the parking area and also the car park at the Dinas end of the gorge (if undertaking full decent)

Park efficiently in the Car Parks, avoid wasting parking space

Encourage clients to **car share** from their point of departure

Consider Centre Bus Sharing if possible

Consider the **use of other sites or alternative Activities** to prevent over-use of the Gorge and Area

Set up your own '**Acceptable behaviour contract**' for your Groups

### **Village Hall**

Use of the Village Hall as follows

- Hall can be hired for £10 per hour
- Lunches or Packed Lunches £4.50 each
- Hall car park can be used if hall booked

Book with :

Lynette – 01639 721498

**For groups undertaking a full descent of the river to finish in the Dinas Rock area please also adhere to the Rules for Dinas Area** 4



## Dinas Area Access Rules for Outdoor Activity Providers

With the increase in popularity of Dinas as a venue for a variety of Outdoor Activities, particularly Gorge Walking, the impact on the local community has continued to grow and remains a challenge for us to resolve. Use of this site is important to a wide range of Providers and whilst we have handled the Gorge Code of Conduct and Concordat well, the problems we cause with high Visitor numbers remain unresolved.

We were asked in 2008 to look at how to reduce the impact and a variety of requests have been circulated to Outdoor Activity Providers in 2008, 2009 and 2010 to take some care in planning their visits to the area, with a varied degree of success.

Guidelines were drawn from the actions that were suggested by all attendees at the full SWOAPG Meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2011. However, by August 2012, with many issues still unresolved due to the unfortunate actions of a small number of providers and renewed pressure from the local community, the Guidelines were replaced with these Rules.

These rules have been created by SWOAPG and in partnership with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and BBNPA and will be reviewed and agreed annually by the membership. The rules form part of the requirements of the land owners (NRW) and BBNPA to show that SWOAPG members are conducting themselves in a professional, environmentally sustainable way and making all possible efforts to minimise impact and disturbance to the local community and visitors to the site and area. Any breach of these rules will be dealt with by the land owner (NRW) through the Enforcement Policy.

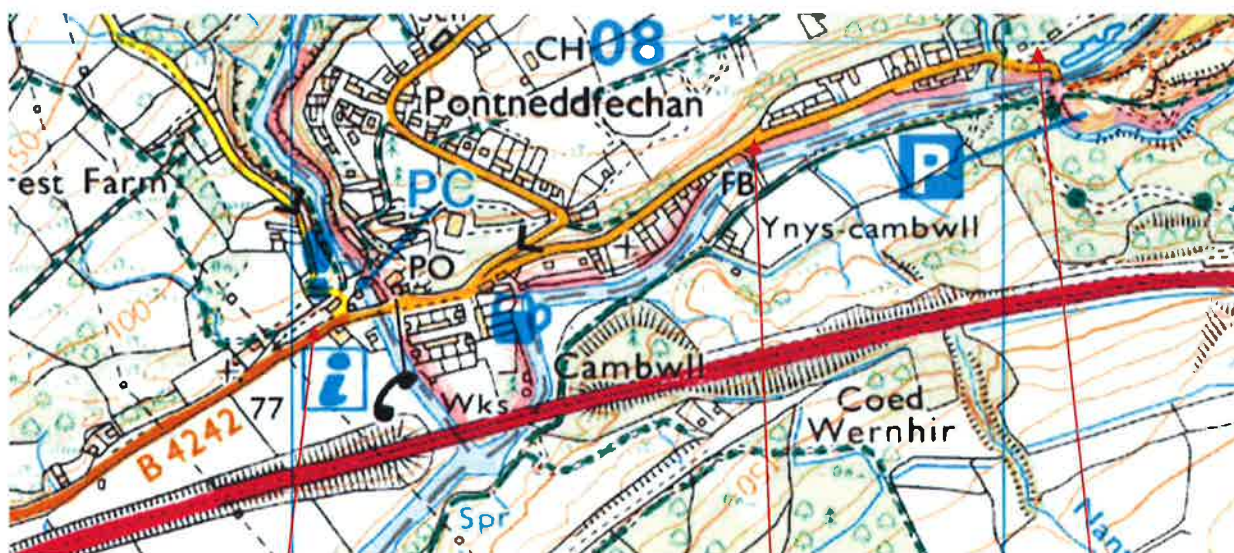
### 1. Parking & Traffic

- a. **Avoid parking in Residential area** at all times. - much of this parking is for elderly residents who need easy access to their homes. This then also prevents noise, disruption and 'changing in the street'
- b. Arrange a **meeting place** for Gorge Clients and then bring the minimum vehicles to the Dinas main car park



## Suggested Alternative Parking

Please adhere to any local parking restrictions and/or any parking schemes in place at alternative parking sites.



1. Beyond  
Angel Inn

2. Where  
there are no  
Residences

3. Book  
Village Hall  
for Car Park

## 2. Changing

- In the main car park, ensure your groups use the **Changing Screens** in the Dell next to the main car park
- In the Village Hall car park, **no changing is permitted**. Either use the Village Hall for changing or send your group to the changing screens in the Main Car Park.
- Avoid changing in front of residents houses at all times**
- Brief groups properly** to reduce/prevent numbers of 'pants on trees'

## 3. Toilets

- Use Toilet facilities at The Angel Inn **Public Toilets** or **book the Village Hall** to use all their facilities

## 4. Numbers

- The Maximum Number of Participants in the Sychryd Gorge is 25** per Organisation at any one time.

## 5. Other

- a. Keep **noise levels to a minimum** and avoid bad language, particularly close to residential areas. Remember that noise carries in these areas. Avoid briefing your group in the Village Hall car park close to houses
- b. **No Litter** and pick up any litter you do find. Take all rubbish (and clothing!) home with you.
- c. **Check the Changing Area** for litter and forgotten equipment once you group has finished changing. Carrying black bags and protective gloves will help with this

## Advice

- **Park efficiently** in the main car park, avoid wasting space
- **Arrange a meeting place** for clients and then bring the minimum number of vehicles to the Dinas main car park
- The main Dinas car park is nearly always full after 11am on a Summer weekend. If arriving after 11am, **consider the use of another venue** or drop off your group and park the vehicle in a suitable place away from the main car park, adhering to Rule 1. Parking & Traffic
- Encourage clients to **car share** from their point of departure
- Consider **Centre Bus Sharing** if possible
- Consider the **use of other sites or alternative Activities** to prevent over-use of the Gorge and Area
- Set up your own '**Acceptable behaviour contract**' for your Groups
- NRW have issued a letter to clarify the issues relating to **sub-contracting** in relation to gorge walking (Appendix 1)

## **Enforcement Policy**

Should a Provider break any of the rules and there is no doubt about who they are, then:

First Transgression of the year –

NRW will write to the provider with a warning that they are known to have broken the rules and should take steps to prevent this from happening again.

Second Transgression of the Year-

NRW will contact the provider and inform them that they will need to submit an improvement plan within 14 days if they wish to continue to use the gorge under the concordat.

Third transgression of the year –

SWOAPG will no longer recognise the provider as signed up to the concordat and will inform NRW of this. NRW will send the provider details of the alternative access arrangement for use of the gorge outside of the concordat.

## **Village Hall**

Use of the Village Hall as follows

- Hall can be hired for £10 per hour
- Lunches or Packed Lunches £4.50 each

Book with:

Dilys Jenkins – 01639 721057 or Lynette – 01639 721498

Some Providers have used the Hall numerous times very successfully, so it is very worth considering, especially as it solves parking problems for you when you book. The Hall has a large meeting/dining/activity room, a kitchen with a small dining space, gents and ladies toilets and showers, though the shower facilities are limited.