



16th Full Meeting – 27th November 2018, Rock UK Summit Centre

Attendance

Simon Ablett, Live2Flow
 Chris Allen, WLA
 Zoe Anthony, Miskin
 Stuart Burns, Gower Activity Centres
 Jeff Calligan, Mountain and River Activities Ltd
 Paul Dann, NRW
 Richard Davies, Outeractive
 Stephen Davies, School Camp Ltd
 Kelvin Doble, Wye Valley Canoes
 Mike Fawcett, Longtown Outdoor Learning Centre
 Simon Fenton, Gower Adventures
 Lee Garbett, Quest Adventure Activities Ltd

Rhys Green, Green Ideas
 Jane Hughes, Wye Valley Canoes
 Damian James, Gower Activity Centres
 David Jones, Rock UK Summit Centre
 Will Kilner, Adventures with Will
 Roger Lee, Hampshire and Cass Foundation Mountain Centre
 Simon Neenan, UWC Atlantic College
 Chris Pierce, Oxfordshire Outdoors
 Steve Rayner, Steve Rayner Outdoor Pursuits (SWOAPG Coordinator)

Emyr Rees, UWC Atlantic College (Chair)
 Mike Smith, Parkwood Outdoors Dolygaer
 Mark Soanes, Call of the Wild Ltd
 Mick Standing, Black Mountain Activities
 Ieuan Starks, School Camp Ltd
 Dave Thomas, Call of the Wild Ltd
 Nick Winder, Tirabad Residential Educational Centre
 Matt Woodfield, Outdoor Matters
 Stuart Wyley, Wye Canoes Ltd

1. Welcome and Apologies

Emyr Rees opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, introduced Steering Group Members and Paul Dann from NRW; and thanked Rock UK for hosting the AGM.

Apologies had been received from:

Richard Carpenter, Outward Bound Trust
 Carl Durham, Black Mountain Activities
 Steffan Davies, Hawk Adventures
 Paul Donovan, Escape Routes
 Michael Downey, Life Changing Activities

Kevin Hannam-Bowen
 Richard Hill
 Paul Kenwright, PGL
 Katie Lloyd, Princes' Trust
 James McLean, AtoZ Expeditions
 Andy Meek, Storey Arms OEC
 Jethro Moore, Adventure Beyond

Clive Richley, Proactive Adventure
 Antonia Salter
 Richard Tyler, BBNPA
 Kevin Walker
 Dianne Worrall, Way2Go
 Fred Wright, Interactivities

2. Matters Arising from November 2017 AGM and April 2018 Emergency General Meeting

Emyr Rees reported on the following items:

- a. AALS Review: the HSE has decided to adopt an industry-run scheme and will be working-up details over the next 3 years (in the meantime the current scheme will continue).
- b. Membership Fees & System (approved at the EGM): we have introduced the new fees and online membership system and the Steering Group has reviewed their operation.
- c. Transition to Company Status (approved at the EGM): The Company is now registered with Companies House and HMRC, has a new bank account and 4 Directors. To all intents and purposes the Company is now fully operational, although the Coordinator still has work to do to tidy up processes and develop our new website. The final part of the company formation is to close-down the 'old' Unincorporated Association, which will happen later in the meeting.

- d. River Wye Glasbury-Hay conflict: the EGM asked us to press the canoeing NGBs to get involved in the conflict around Geoff Maynard's 'toll' on the river. We did this, and Canoe Wales is actively involved in the situation. A brief meeting will be held with interested Members immediately following the AGM, to discuss responses to Powys CC's recently-announced consultation exercise.

3. Overview of Activity, Last Year and Next Year

Emyr Rees described the following achievements and activities on behalf of the Steering Group:

- Membership System: the Coordinator has spent a lot of his time over the last 6 months putting the membership system together – and then using it send out e-mail alerts and manage events. We chose a system called PaySubsOnline because it seemed to do everything we wanted. We know it's not perfect – but it's inexpensive (there's no licence fee for the software, but we pay a small fee for each payment taken through the system) AND it has made the Coordinator's life a lot easier (which saves us money in the long-run). Emyr encouraged attendees if they hadn't already registered as a member, to please do so! There's a membership class for everyone –details are on our website. He added that PaySubsOnline is changing its name to LoveAdmin in December.
- Waterfalls Area: we've continued to work very closely with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Natural Resources Wales to operate the gorge-walking Concordat and maintain good relations with the local community. Members will be aware of the access issues we've had over the last year at Loonies' Leap, firstly with the gunpowder works restrictions and more recently with the threatened closure of the access road – we've worked closely with BBNPA and NRW to provide the best possible information to members about these.

On 17th June we organised a free activity day for Pontneddfechan residents, with

- gorge-walking by Call of the Wild and Urdd Gobaith Cymru (thanks to Mark Soanes and Rhys Pinner);
- climbing by RipnRock (thanks to Dave Hanham-Haines);
- birds of prey display by Mountain & River Activities (thanks to Jeff Calligan); and
- geological walk-and-talks by Alan Bowring (thanks to BBNPA).

Since we introduced our new membership arrangements, we've needed to take some steps to identify those Providers who are 'entitled' to use the gorge under the Concordat. We've sent regular updated lists to NRW & BBNPA and published these on our website – and sent out vehicle ID cards, which wardens have told us have been very useful for them to see who's in the gorge. This year has mostly been 'self-policing', but for 2019 the land managers are planning to do some 'spot check' events on site, AND they have asked us whether we can look into a method of identifying groups when they're actually IN the gorges. This was to be addressed by a discussion with Members later in the meeting.

- Paddlesport: the Coordinator had Steve met recently with Richard Ball of BBNPA and agreed that the Brecon Beacons Reservoir Passport Scheme should continue as it is, but is still working on arranging a meeting with relevant Dwr Cymru Welsh Water managers to discuss extending the scheme and/or SWOAPG taking responsibility for it.

Powys County Council has just announced that it will be launching a consultation exercise in December/January on the future management of canoeing from Glasbury to Hay – and they see SWOAPG (and our members) as key contributors to this. There will therefore be a separate meeting immediately after the AGM for all Providers with an interest in this. Also, Geoff Maynard of Llanthomas fishery has followed-through on his plan to charge a 'toll' and has been sending invoices to Wye Valley Canoes (but no other operators) since April. Wye Valley Canoes has refused to pay and Mr Maynard is now threatening court action, arguing that canoeists are trespassing on his land and he has the right to charge an 'admission fee'. IF he succeeds in this there would be massive implications for all providers (and all canoeists on all rivers). Canoe Wales is advising Wye Valley Canoes as best they can – and Jane Hughes is here to say more about what we can all do for her, at the separate meeting later on.

- Representing Members' Interests: the Coordinator and Steering Group members continue to represent SWOAPG at various national and local forums to ensure that the interests of Outdoor Activity Providers are properly represented, including:
 - Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation;
 - Outdoor Alliance;
 - National Access Forum Wales;
 - Southeast and Mid-Wales Tourism Forums;
 - Brecon Beacons Local Access Forum;

- Valleys Landscape Park Task Force; and
- Waterfalls Area Safety Group.

We also made a submission in October to the Welsh Government consultation 'Brexit and our Land', calling for recreational access to be recognised as a 'public good'.

- **Workshops:** we've run several workshops this year and are always interested in ideas for what else Providers would like us to offer:
 - Gorges Code of Conduct Training, May, Sep, Oct 2018
 - Mellte rescue workshop Jun 2018
 - Caving workshop Jun 2018
 - Geology workshop postponed (due to heavy rain!)
 - Volunteering day Cwm Porth Oct 2018
- **Vale of Glamorgan Coastal Activities Study:** WATO – with SWOAPG as one of its delivery partners – successfully bid for a feasibility study project with Vale of Glamorgan council, to look at the scope for more outdoor activities on the Vale of Glamorgan coast. The study will look at the potential for various sites being developed for outdoor activities – and the scope for providers delivering activities at those sites. It will also include a 'showcase event' in the spring, where Providers (and the public) will be able to see activities in action. This should also bring some more funds into SWOAPG, since we'll be claiming from WATO more than we'll be paying the Coordinator for his work on this!

4. Presentation of Accounts 2016-17

Emyr explained that copies of the Annual Report and Accounts were included in the pack handed out on arrival and had been published on our website, with a link sent to Members on Sunday; and that he didn't intend to go through the Annual Report since he had covered most of it by his presentation.

Ieuan Starks presented the accounts, noting that the Steering Group had told Members at the last AGM that we were concerned about our future funding; and at the EGM in April that Visit Wales had withdrawn funding and we could run out of money by Jun 2018. He reminded Members that at the end of the Association's Financial Year in March 2018, our bank balance was reducing rapidly and that the EGM in April had agreed to introduce Membership Subscription Fees, which the Steering Group would review in October (£75 for Full Members; £25 for Associate Members; and Free for Youth Members, Supporters, Subscribers and Additional Staff of Corporate Members).

As a result – helped by the BBNPA grant to support SWOAPG's Strategic Development – at the end of October 2018 things look much healthier:

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Income & Revenue | £ 7,799 |
| Visit Wales Funding | £ 7,799 |
| Expenditure | £ 10,636 |
| Co-ordinator fees | £ 9,373 |
| Workshop costs | £ 235 |
| Administration | £ 1028 |
| Income less Expenditure | £ -2,837 |
| Opening balance | £ 4,675 |
| Closing balance | £ 1,838 |

A. April 2017-March 2018

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Income & Revenue | £ 8,983 |
| BBNPA Funding | £ 2,683 |
| Membership Fees | £ 5,925 |
| Workshop Fees | £ 375 |
| Expenditure | £ 5,022 |
| Co-ordinator fees | £ 4,426 |
| Workshop costs | £ 200 |
| Payment Processing Fees | £ 251 |
| Administration | £ 146 |
| Income less Expenditure | £ 3,961 |
| Opening balance | £ 1,838 |
| Closing balance | £ 5,798 |

B. April-October 2018

Ieuan stated that we currently had:

- 71 Full Members
- 17 Associate Members
- 28 Additional Staff of Corporate Members
- 20 Supporters
- 44 Subscribers
- 150+ 'former members'

leuan then explained that our annual spend on the Coordinator was approximately £7,800 (based on the last 3½ year average); membership income so far this year was £5,925; and we could expect additional 'project' funding of around £2,400 (based on the last 3½ year average) – so the Steering Group was confident that we'll manage without changing things as long as we're careful.

5. Approval of new Terms of Reference

Emyr explained that new Terms of Reference were required because of our transition to Company status. Although the Company is already governed by Articles of Association agreed at the April 2017 EGM, the Terms of Reference add detail, describing membership categories and the roles of the Steering Group, Board of Directors and key personnel. Copies of the new Terms of Reference were included in the meeting packs and had been published online and a link sent to members on Sunday evening.

Members present voted unanimously to approve the new Terms of Reference.

6. Election of Steering Group, Directors and Chairperson

Emyr thanked Simon Neenan and Matt Woodfield who were standing down as Steering Group members this year (Matt after 2 years as Chair and 3 years as Coordinator). He also explained that Steve Rayner felt it was not appropriate for the Coordinator to also be a Director and Steering Group Member, so had withdrawn from these two roles.

Two nominations had been received for the 3 Steering Group vacancies: Stephen Davies (School Camp Ltd) and Roger Lee (Hampshire & Cass Foundation Mountain Centre) – both were elected unanimously by the meeting.

Two nominations had also been received for Directors: Mark Soanes (who was already co-opted but needed to be confirmed by election) and Stephen Davies – both were elected unanimously by the meeting.

Emyr confirmed that he had agreed to continue in his position as Chairperson

7. Formal Dissolution of SWOAPG as an Unincorporated Association

Emyr explained that, now that the new company was operational and all funds had been transferred from the old Unincorporated Association, we now needed to formally dissolve this and close down its old bank account. This was approved unanimously by the meeting.

8. Approval of 2019 Membership Fees

Emyr stated that, since our financial situation has stabilised and our membership numbers are healthy, the Steering Group had concluded that the membership fees set in April were 'correct' and did not wish to increase them. They had also considered whether to introduce 'tiered' fees for e.g. different sized businesses; or different fees for non-profit organisations – but believed that this would add unnecessary complexity and would be difficult to make 'fair' – so were proposing to stick with the current 'simple' structure. Although the EGM had agreed that there would be an annual inflationary increase, the Steering Group did not wish to impose this in 2019, so proposed that fees for April 2019 to March 2020 should be the same as 2018-19 (£75 Full members, £25 Associate Members). This was approved unanimously by the meeting.

9. Q&A with Steering Group & Coordinator

Steve Rayner asked a question of attendees "how would you feel about us introducing armbands for group leader identification in the gorge?"; and suggested some ideas for how this might work and what it might cost. There followed a lengthy discussion on the subject, during which the following points and concerns were raised:

- Concerns were raised that any system could be abused and would be pointless if not 'policed'
- It is not SWOAPG's role to 'police' the Concordat arrangement
- Paul Dann confirmed that NRW and BBNPA wanted an easy means of identifying groups in the gorge, which would be of benefit to Members as well as to them (by clearly showing who were legitimate gorge users) – and that their wardens would intend to 'challenge' users without ID
- Better signage was suggested as an alternative deterrent to 'rogue providers'
- ID cards for group leaders and/or marked-up buoyancy aids were suggested as an alternative to printed armbands

The meeting voted against the introduction of printed armbands but tasked the Steering Group to consider the introduction of ID cards and to recommend new signage to NRW.

There were no further questions raised by Members.