

South Wales **Outdoor Activity Providers** Group

Minutes of Inaugural Meeting 26th July, 2010 at Garwnant Visitor Centre at 6.30pm

In Attendance

Adrian Herald – Adrenaline Buzz	Jo Clarke – Wilderness Centre
Andrew Bonner – Pro Active Adventure	Joe Waters – Kadjuna
Andy Cummings – Manzoku	Juliet Parker-Smith – Trewern OEC
Andy Lamb – Wales Outdoors	Keith Lee – Bikes and Hikes
Andy Meek – Storey Arms OEC	Lee Cave – Longtown
Andy Torbet – Ultimate Activity Company	Les Chattyton – Neath College
Anna Stickland – Absolute Adventure	M.S. Taylor – Hereford Council
Arwel Hughes – Antur Ltd.	Mark Soanes – Call of the Wild
Ben Matthews – Herefordshire College	Martin Skinner – Pendarren House OEC
Ben Scholes – Rhondda Cynon Taff	Michael Downey – Life Changing Activities
Bill Beynon – Trinity St.Davids University	Mick Collins – Hay Outdoor Training
Bob Keep – Caerphilly CBC / Ynys Hywel	Mike Wright – Longtown
Carl Durham – Black Mountain Activities	Neil McMillen – Celtic Events
Cat Morris – Quest Adventures	Nick Fitzgerald – Robert Jeffrey Centre
Cheri-Lee Birch – Fairbridge De Cymru	Pam Bell – Mountain & Water
Dave Ing – Over the Hill	Paul Dann – FCW
Dave Phillips – Swansea Youth Service	Paul Morris – The Edge Outdoor Activities
Donna Carless – Dynamic Rock Adventure	Punch Maughan – BBT
Dylan Lamb – Wales Outdoors	Rich Hill – Glasbury House OEC
Edmund Wood – Climb When Ready	Richard Tyler – BBNPA
Fred Wright – Interactivities	Riki Phillips – Mynydd Adventure
Gary Evans – Hawk Associates	Rooth Langston-Hart – Fairbridge West
Gavin Clifford – Antur Ltd.	Sam Clarke – The Outbase
Glynn Lewis – Usk College, Bear Adventure	Sam Stokes – Taste for Adventure Centre
Helen Pye – BBNPA	Seb Haley – Swansea Youth Service
Hopkin Smith – Taff Valley	Steve Rees – Adrenaline Buzz
Huw Dullea – Treads and Trails	Steve Roberts – Blue Mountain Activities
Jeff Calligan – Mountain & River Activities	Tim Oliver – Wilderness Centre
Jeff Ridd – Freelance	Tom Partridge – Rhondda Cynon Taff
Jethro Moore – Adventure Beyond	Victoria Phillips – Mountain Mayhem

1. Welcome

The meeting was Chaired by Jethro Moore and he opened the meeting, thanking everyone for attending.

2. Apologies

Andrew Creber – Cardiff CC Outdoors	Kevin Walker – Mountain Activities
Chris Pierce – Woodlands OEC	Matt Woodfield – Freelance
Geoff Haden – Clyne Farm	Richard Morley – Bridgend College
Gethin Williams – Pendine OEC	Steffan Davies – S bri Cymru
Ian Kennet – Gwent Outdoor Centres	Steve Rayner – Scout Association
Kevin Jackson – Kilvrough Manor OEC	

3. Background and Setting the Scene

Jethro outlined the reasons for the need to set up a Group to represent Outdoor Activity Providers in South Wales, explaining that the increase in the number of providers and the need to resolve the Gorge Walking Code of Conduct and Concordat were key drivers in getting the Group set-up. A number of meetings had taken place between the Working Party and BBNPA, CCW & FCW to develop the Code of Conduct on behalf of Providers.

Jethro explained that what we now have in place should help all the Centres and Outdoor Activity Providers to maintain access to venues as well as numerous other benefits, such as sharing best practice and sustainable ways of working, training events and possibly, in time, staff sharing and other initiatives. There is a lot of potential benefit and the new Group is absolutely not just about the Concordat.

4. Explanation of Levels

Gary Evans reminded the meeting of the need for the 3 Levels of membership, to ensure that anyone joining has a measure of control over the level of involvement they want to have, as well as the amount of mailings and information that they receive. The Concordat can be signed up to at any of the 3 Levels.

Level 1

Listed on the Brecon Beacons E-mail Alert System, so only receive urgent and relevant e-mails

Level 2

As above plus being willing to receive a wider range of information relating to Activity Provision within the Brecon Beacons and South Wales.
Access to Group Training

Level 3

As above plus inclusion in a wider range of initiatives such as tourism representation and liaison and access to external Marketing opportunities

5. The Code of Conduct and Concordat – Signing up and next steps

Paul Dann explained the background to the Concordat and that joining the SWOAPG enables Providers to also sign up to the Concordat. Paul explained the documents that together make the Concordat, including the work still being completed on Generic Risk Assessment and the need to report Major Incidents.

Paul was concerned that there remains a risk of the Gorge not being in a favourable condition in the future, which could result in the CCW asking FCW to stop Gorge Walking at the site. He assured the meeting that this would be something he would not want to happen and that the Concordat process and Code of Conduct had been put in place to ensure that this could be avoided. However, it is ultimately up to the Activity Providers to work in accordance with the Code of Conduct to protect their access to the site.

Gary Evans explained that this was Version 4 of the Concordat and that whilst the Working Party had worked very hard in making sure it would be practical and effective for both the Providers and the FCW, clearly this was the first version that anyone outside the Working Party had seen. On this basis, this would be a good opportunity for those attending to ask questions or express any concerns.

Question 1 : What is the timeframe of the Concordat ?

Answer : 24 months

Question 2 – How will access be ‘policed’. If people don’t sign-up and won’t work in an appropriate way, FCW would end up closing the site ?

Answer : There will be a list of signed up Groups that will be published for SWOAPG members, with copies shared with BBNPA and FCW. FCW and BBNPA will spot check the site and the list will enable FCW to determine whether Groups using the Gorge are signed up or not when spot checking. If an organisation is seen for the first time and is unsigned, they will be approached and the situation explained to them. This will be supported by clear signage at the site. If this approach is ignored, the offending organisation will be written to and they will be told that they are trespassing. If a Local Authority provider, FCW would not have an aversion to contact the Authority Head directly. In addition to this, there may be insurance issues for organisations who have an accident whilst effectively trespassing.

There were further concerns expressed about not being able to get everyone signed up. It was suggested that we should not be afraid to approach people ourselves, as Providers, and to be positive and helpful in encouraging others to get on board. Gary Evans explained that he had already done so on a dozen occasions and had received very positive responses. Helen Pye offered to assist if Providers wanted to pass on concerns about organisations not signing up to her at BBNPA.

Question 3 – What if the Gorge is being used in an inappropriate way by signed-up Providers, what do we do ?

Answer : We can all start by being role models and encouraging others to follow suit. This isn’t about ‘splitting’ on other providers, we can influence as best we can without being confrontational.

Question 4 – Is there not a correlation between numbers of people accessing the site and the impact on the site ?

Answer : Absolutely yes. However, this is a problem that we as a Group have to look at a little bit further on. If we can’t resolve amongst ourselves the issues of access, parking and impact on the local community, as well as on the site, then a solution will be imposed on us.

Question 5 – What about the impact by the General Public ?

Answer : BBNPA have a Management Plan for the site which is being developed ongoing which may help here. FCW decided not to publish the Code of Conduct and the maps on-site, so as not to encourage the general public to use the Gorge. The approach has been to target the 95% of impacting users initially, for greatest and quickest gain for the site.

Juliet Parker-Smith explained that there have been some areas of the Gorge responding already to the changes in the way many Providers are using the site, which is a good start. It shows that what we are doing will make a difference. It was suggested that it is how we train and educate Providers and Staff and how we get buy-in that are our most powerful tools.

Gary closed this section of the meeting by explaining that to be approved to use the site by FCW, each Provider/Organisation would need to have joined SWOAPG, have signed the Concordat declaration and a representative of each Provider/Organisation would have attended one of the training sessions. We will be running more training sessions in early September and dates will be published soon.

It was also explained that it is not necessary to sign for the Concordat to join the SWOAPG. This was to ensure that Providers who do not use the Sychryd Gorge are still encouraged to be members of the Group.

6. Role of the Co-ordinator and Co-ordinator Selection Process

Mark Soanes explained that it was felt to be important for the Group to have a Co-ordinator who was not giving their time entirely voluntarily, as this has been a problem for Groups in the past. The good news is that there is funding available to assist with the work of a Co-ordinator via Brecon Beacons Tourism as a result of their role with the Wales Activity Tourism Organisation (WATO) and from Collabora8, administered by BBNPA. This equates to around 20 days per year for the next 2 years. This should be sufficient for a Co-ordinator to carry out the key duties required of them.

All Activity Providers on the current Alert list were sent the draft Co-ordinator Roles and Responsibilities and Mark explained that he wanted to give those present the opportunity to comment on this. Mark read through the key roles listed and asked the meeting for agreement to this.

It was suggested that the role could include the Co-ordinator being a contact point for Providers wanting to report issues relating to unsigned Groups in the Sychryd Gorge, though not 'policing' Dinas ! It was suggested that this is covered by the point in the document – 'Regular contact with Outdoor Activity Providers to understand issues and ways to support Providers on an ongoing basis'.

The meeting approved the Role and Responsibilities document.

Mark explained the selection Process :

1. A Tender specification document will be sent to all Providers on the current Alert list in the next couple of weeks.
2. Anyone interested in the role will then need to submit a Tender
3. The Tenders will be reviewed by Punch Maughan, BBT (they will be Contracting the Co-ordinator), Richard Tyler, BBNPA (Collabora8 funding), plus 2 members of the Incoming Steering Group (to be selected by the Steering Group).

The ongoing management of the Co-ordinator would be undertaken by Brecon Beacons Tourism and funding and payments would be administered and audited by them.

The Co-ordinator would be a member of the Steering Group and would be expected to work closely with the Steering Group members.

Punch Maughan explained that BBT has been able to be involved because they have been sitting on WATO, as until now, there has not been a South Wales Group to represent Outdoor Activity Providers. WATO has been prepared to support the formation of a South Wales Group and to help it grow to the strength of the other Welsh Groups – Snowdonia Active and Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group.

Punch also explained that it may be possible to secure further funding later via WATO, but that it is important to use the money now to 'pump prime' the setting up of the Group so that things like Website design and initial time-consuming administration in getting members signed up would be complete whilst funding is assured.

7. Group Aims

Juliet Parker-Smith explained that the draft Group Aims were devised by considering the needs of a modern representative group, the Concordat administration and lessons learned from previous Groups. She stressed that it is hoped that this will be much more than just a Concordat Group and that it becomes something very positive for all of us. Juliet ran through the draft Aims and asked the meeting for any Questions or Comments.

Question 1 : Will we be extending the Concordat to other areas and will we be Proactive regarding Access issues. Could we 'drive' for our own Concordats ?

Answer : This may be bettered answered in the Section of the meeting regarding the Environmental Charter

Question 2 : Will we be Monitoring Changes in impact ?

Answer : There would be a benefit to monitoring the improvements . CCW will do so and we should be able to access the results and promote the positive outcomes. We can be Proactive in this ourselves to show how our commitment has provided good results. It may be possible for the BBNPA Education Team to help with this. It was agreed that this would be a useful way forward and we may be able to promote successes on our Website.

Question 3 : Can we include involvement in Environmental Improvement Projects in the Aims ?

Answer : Yes we should.

Question 4 : Have the BMC been contacted in relation to the Dinas/Sychryd area ?

Answer : Paul Dann contacted Elfyn Jones, the BMC Access Officer and during a meeting on-site, Elfyn felt that Climbers could come up with something as well, perhaps incorporating this at a later date. Paul suggested that we work together on it. Andy Cummings, who was at the meeting, felt that it had been extremely positive.

Question 5 : What is the role of the Group in Policing Group members ?

Answer : The more Group members we have, the more strength we have in dealing with issues. We don't want to discourage people from joining and it may well be that we will have to deal with a problem at a later date. It was felt that it would be better to deal with issues if they occur, rather than writing something into the aims that may not be necessary or appropriate.

8. Environmental Charter – how it fits with this Group

Gary Evans explained that quite a number of Providers had asked whether the Outdoor Environmental Charter that had been developed 10 years ago could now be taken on by SWOAPG. Jethro explained that the Pembrokeshire charter continues to provide real benefit.

Gary asked the meeting whether it should be a part of the SWOAPG. The response was resolutely that it was essential to keep it and that people working in the Outdoors should be passionate about an Environmentally Sensitive approach.

The meeting voted unanimously to include it as at all 3 levels in the future so that members sign up to the Environmental Charter every time they sign up to the Group.

It was agreed that the Charter be circulated in the coming weeks so that members could have an input to any updating that was necessary and it would then be taken on by SWOAPG once in a final format.

9. Associate Membership

Mark Soanes explained that there is a need to have a means of external interested organisations being a part of SWOAPG. The proposed way of doing this is by Associate Membership. Mark asked the meeting for any comments on this.

It was questioned as to whether this was actually necessary, as surely people could just be invited to attend rather than being Associate Members.

An alternative view was that the Associate Member model is tried and tested by organisations such as the BMC and that we should use it.

When asked to vote, the result was inconclusive. One person was against and although there were a good number for, there were numerous abstentions.

It was agreed that the Steering Group would consider the issue at their first meeting and take the matter forward there.

10. Group Meeting Frequency

Jethro suggested two meetings a year for SWOAPG meetings, both out of the season, perhaps in March and October.

It was asked what the decision making powers of the Steering Group were. It was felt that the Co-ordinator and the Steering Group would make straight forward day to day decisions between them, but that the bigger issues would always be brought to the main Group to ensure that all members had an opportunity to give their views.

It was also suggested that SWOAPG may well need to become a properly constituted body if it is to raise funding and if there are a lot of decisions to be made. This was agreed and Gary explained that we had taken the approach of allowing the Group to evolve as appropriate, rather than getting bogged down in bureaucracy initially.

The meeting agreed with 2 meetings per year.

11. Election of Steering Group

Initially, the meeting agreed to 6 to 8 people for the Steering Group. However, following discussion about equal representation of LEA, Commercial, Independent and Freelance members, the following 10 people were nominated for the Steering Group :

Andy Meek – Storey Arms OEC	LEA
Carl Durham – Black Mountain Activities	Commercial
Jeff Calligan – Mountain & River Activities	Commercial
Jethro Moore – Adventure Beyond	Commercial
Jon Everington – Glasbury House OEC	LEA
Juliet Parker-Smith – Trewern OEC	LEA
Mark Soanes – Call of the Wild	Commercial
Matt Woodfield – Freelancer	Freelance
Steffan Davies – Sbri Cymru	Commercial
Tom Partridge – Rhondda Cynon Taff	Independent

It was noted that the work undertaken by the Working Party for the last 18 months was appreciated to the extent that all members of the Working Party, which would now be dissolved, were asked to join the Steering Group. It was explained that Chris Pierce would prefer not to take a place at the moment due to other commitments. Gary Evans stated that he would try his luck at tendering for the Co-ordinator role and if successful he would take a place on the Steering Group through that role, whilst stressing that anyone could apply for the Co-ordinator position and hence join the Steering Group if successful.

12. Any Other Business

Point 1 : Will there be a Code of Conduct for the River Mellte ?

Answer : Probably, later on.

Point 2 : Will there be charging for car parking at Dinas ?

Answer : Paul Dann explained that he has been talking to the local community as a way of handling car parking via a Management agreement, but this has stalled and needs to be revisited. Paul gave an assurance that he understands that if Providers are going to pay for parking then they should be getting something for their money – e.g. security, changing areas, toilets, etc. Paul explained that he is seeking funding for improvements to parking and facilities and that he will work with SWOAPG to ensure changes are appropriate to the needs of the site users.

Point 3 : Will we have links with other Groups in Wales ?

Answer : Yes, through membership of WATO and hence via the Co-ordinators of all 3 groups.

13. Meeting Close

Gary reminded everyone present to remember to sign-up to the Group and Concordat before leaving.

Jethro thanked everyone for attending and for their input and closed the meeting.

14. Concordat Signing

Following the meeting, 49 Organisations/Freelancers signed-up to join SWOAPG and the Concordat. 2 Organisations signed up to SWOAPG, without the Concordat.

