



South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group

Minutes of Seventh Group Meeting

29th April, 2013 at Garwnant, Nr. Merthyr at 6.30pm

In Attendance

Adrian Thomas - ADE Alan Ward – Bigfoot Services Ltd. Aled Davies – Expeditions Wales Alix Hill – Expeditions Wales Arwel Hughes - Antur Ltd. Belinda Fear – MTA Ben Longhurst – CIWW Dave Barrow – Princess Trust Bristol Dave Phillips – Swansea Youth Service Dave Thomas – Call of the Wild David Jones – Rock UK David Williams - Neath Port Talbot College Elsie Little – Cambrian Caving Council Gareth Reid – Royal Nave OLTC Talybont Gary Evans – Hawk Associates Henry Loweth – Blue Ocean Activities Hopkin Smith - Taff Valley Buggy Trails Jamie Ellson - Freelance Jamie Simpson - Princess Trust Jay Murphy – Roayl Navy OLTC Talybont Jethro Moore – Adventure Beyond Joe Waters – RJC John Cliffe – AALS	Keith Williams – BBNPA Lee Garbett – Quest Adventures Les Chattington – NPTC Martin Smith – Martins Walks Matt Woodfield – Freelance Mick Collins - Outdoors@Hay Neil McMullen – Blue Ocean Activities Nick Winder – Tirabad RET Nigel Jones – Adventures Activities Ltd. Nigel Midgley – Canoe Wales Paul Dann - NRW Paul Willets – Royal Navy OLTC Talybont Richard Hamilton – Atlantic College Riki Phillips - Mynydd Outdoor Adventure Simon Neenan – Atlantic College Simon New – Coleg Powys Steve Porter – Breakout Adventure Tim Hindle – Tirabad RET Tom Packham – DCWW Tom Partridge – everything Outdoors Will Kilner – South Wales MTA / Freelance
--	--

1. Welcome:

Matt Woodfield opened the meeting, SWOAPG Chairman, thanking everyone for attending. The chairman thanked Natural Resources Wales and Paul Dann for hosting the meeting and also welcomed the guest speakers for the meeting.

2. Apologies:

Andy Cummings - Mazoku Andy Meek – Storey Arms OEC Carl Durham – Black Mountain Activities Dave Windebank – Wye MTB Fred Wright – Inter Activities Geoff Haden - Clyne Farm Centre Ian Kennet – Gwent Adventure Centre Jeff Calligan – Mountain and River Activities Jo Rickets – Coleg Powys Kevin Walker - Mountain Activities Mark Soanes – Call of the Wild Nick Fitzgerald - RJC Nick Lefty - Freelance	Nigel Flude - The Links College Pam Bell - Mountain and Water Paul Donavon – Escape Routes Paul Peet - Afan Valley MTB Hire Paul Webb – High5 Peter Cole - Capital Region Tourism Punch Maughan - BBT Richard Hill – Glasbury House OEC Roger Heslop – Capital Adventure Wales Sean Taylor – Hereford County Council Steve Rayner – Brecon Canoe Club Vicki Phillips – Mountain Mayhem
--	---

3. Canoe Wales Canoeing Instructor Awards- Nigel Midgely, Canoe Wales:

Nigel gave a brief overview of the proposed structure and remit of the 'Canoe Wales Canoeing Instructor Awards'. The awards are, in essence, based around helping to bridge the gap between 'participation' and the 'coaching' aspect of the UKCC awards we currently have in place although there will be a route into the UKCC scheme from any Canoe Wales Awards.

The slides from this presentation can be viewed at part of the SWOAPG 7th Full Meeting PowerPoint Presentation: <http://www.swoapg.org.uk/index.php/members-area/meeting-minutes/>

4. Passport Canoeing Scheme – Tom Packham, DCWW:

Tom officially launched the Passport Scheme to members present at the meeting giving a brief overview of the process that has taken place to get to this point. He stressed that for DCWW this scheme could be a gamble and that he has had to fight hard to push it through the organisation. Gary Evans thanked Tom for his work and both Gary and Tom reminded members that it was in their interest to adhere to the remit of the scheme and show a good response in uptake and attitude towards the scheme to allow any future developments and increase to access / permissions etc.

Following the presentation Tom Partridge (TP) delivered a short guidance session on how to complete the forms to apply for the passport with the BBNPA who administrate the scheme on behalf of DCWW. This included info on a SWOAPG generic Risk Management Plan and also some additional info on the application process.

For full details please refer to the slides from the SWOAPG 7th Full Meeting PowerPoint Presentation: <http://www.swoapg.org.uk/index.php/members-area/meeting-minutes/>

ACTION: TP to notify all members that the Passport Scheme has gone live including how to sign up and gain further information.

5. Update on Membership and SWOAPG Progress:

TP presented the following summary.

SWOAPG Membership

Level 1 Members – 13
Level 2 Members – 83
Level 3 Members – 96
Associate Members – 11
Observers – 18
Clubs - 4
Total Joined – 225

There has been a small increase in club membership and also in a range of individual or freelance providers joining the group. In addition, although our membership area has not increased in size we will be actively encouraging providers from outside our area to join / observe where there is no group set up for them to join relevant to their area (Mid / West Wales)

Update on Progress

- a) The www.swoapg.org.uk website has been live for over a year and has been a valuable source of information and a great resource for members to download files, get event info, find out about our projects and look for advertised courses and job. TP gave a rough breakdown of web stats which show that there have been over 1000 page views in the last month with over 300 unique loads of the swoapg.org.uk website address and also commented on the success of the FaceBook page where posts regularly get seen by 50-80 subscribers to the South Wales Instructor FaceBook Group where many of our members are subscribed also. This link to the group also helps to bridge the gap in communication and info sharing between the activity instructors and practitioners and the centre managers / business owners.
- b) TP stated that there had been a need to create a 'Fair Business Statement' to sit along side the Terms of Reference for the group in response to a method of dealing with complaints and concerns to marketing and promotional campaigns, A good example of this was shared with those present which referred to the removal of the Visit Wales top 10 activity providers list on the internet which listed the 10 'best' providers in the area. The statement provides a mechanism of report and dealing with these issues and setting about the wheels of motion to deal with resolving the issues in the interest of fair and healthily marketing and competition for business. This has also helped up deal with issues relating to duplication of provision that has been funded by Welsh government which threatened to undercut and disperse the existing provision supplied by one of our members.
- c) 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. As part of our commitment to WATO we will be asking members to participate in a forthcoming survey which will help Visit Wales, and in turn Welsh Government, evaluate the economic benefit and value of the outdoor activity sector in Wales. This is a key piece of research that will help in securing a future for the industry in terms of funding streams, grants and support moving forward. TP will notify members when this takes place and urged all present to fully engage with the research as the outcomes may have a dramatic effect on the future of the sector and SWOAPG.
- In addition, TP confirmed that Visit Wales have identified ongoing financial funding for SWOAPG for the financial year 2013-14 which will allow the SWOAPG to continue into the next year or so for definite.
- GE gave an update on BBT, as Punch Maughan was unable to attend the meeting. This year the two key focus areas for BBT have been :
1. A change to the structure of BBT with Punch changing role to Chairman. Elizabeth Jeffreys has stood down from this role after years of good work in the role. The restructuring has changed the role of Chairman and Punch is in this position. Her previous role of Director is being replaced with a new BBT Business Development Manager role to work closely with member businesses and the post is currently being advertised. These changes will help BBT delivery it's remit effectively going forward.
 2. The Brecon Beacons Destination Website continues to be a huge commitment in time at the moment, with BBT working closely with BBNPA to bring the project to a conclusion and launch the new site. The planned 1st May launch has had to be postponed due to technical difficulties and both organisations remain committed to finalising this project
- SWOAPG continue to be represented on the BBT board, with Mick Collins and Mark Soanes undertaking roles of BBT Board Members.

- d) GE briefed the meeting on the finalised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SWOAPG and the BBNPA. SWOAPG was fortunate at it's start to receive funding from Collabor8, administered by BBNPA. This funding was concluded last year, so the relationship between the two organisations no longer had a formal standing. Relationships with BBNPA staff have been developed over many years, but we have been very much aware that individuals move on or change roles and that a way of 'connecting' the organisations provides a stronger platform for discussion and perhaps future funding. To achieve this, the MoU was developed and over the last year, it has been developed to reach agreement. The final version has now been signed off by the SWOAPG Steering Group, the BBNPA Warden Team and the BBNPA Corporate Management Group. An e-mail explaining this further will be provided to all member in the next few weeks.
- e) TP informed members that the work on the Big Pitch 2013 had come to an end and the final of the challenge was held the Pier Head Building in Cardiff Bay on the 22nd April 2013. A full press release will be made available to all in due course and info is available to view on the project on the SWOAPG website. TP commented that some of the ideas presented by the students were relevant and valid, including on relating to a festival for the outdoors which was in the pipeline for the SWOAPG and VRP anyway so the outcomes and findings could be of real use to the VRP team (who were represented on the judging panel) in the planning, promotion and marketing of the 'Discovery Week' festival concept.

SWOAPG Priorities Moving Forward – Q and A

A chance for questions followed. TP asked those present what they felt the SWOAPG should focus on for 2013 and the future. There were only two comments, one related to workshops which was an agenda item later in the meeting. The other question asked for an update on the NCC (Coasteering) and where this was at in the development. Jethro Moore explained that there are still plans to develop and TP suggested members interested in the developments and the role of the NCC to contact Tony Rees who is the area representative – theoutdoortony@gmail.com In addition, Jethro provided a link for members to report coasteering incidents and accidents online, for more info visit: www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/waid/index.asp

6. VRP 'Discovery Week':

TP has been working with the VRP in the development of an outdoor festival for the October half term which could showcase a range of outdoor activities and provide funded opportunities for members to deliver outdoor activities in the VRP area. The funding will be used, where possible, to create an opportunity to permit 'Flagship' events as a 'one off' in the VRP – such as, abseiling from castles or industrial structures.

The event is likely to take place over a long weekend but providers and activities could use the brand of the festival to promote their additional activities if they are in keeping with the theme and locations of the VRP and festival.

TP asked members which end of half term week could work best for them and it was noted that there is a large BBNPA orienteering event planned for the weekend of the 26-27th October and best to avoid this time and/or promote under the umbrella of the VRP festival where possible.

In addition TP noted that there is currently a lack of good quality 'group' imagery for the Valleys area and Luke Maggs has offered to facilitate 'free' shoots and videoing of activity groups operating in the Valleys. If you wish to contact Luke to discuss further you can email him on the following address: Luke.Maggs@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

7. Access Issues:

TP noted that access has become more of an issue in the SWAOPG area during his time as co-ordinator and it would appear that more and more land owners are starting to attempt to charge and make demands for access to land. TP reminded those present that the co-ordinator and the steering group work very hard to deal with these issues as they arise and do not wish to be seen as 'creating' the access problems in the first case.

a) Wye and Usk

Following up on an action from the last full meeting in November TP made members aware that he had been successful in attaining a place on the Wye Usk Foundation Steering Group for Canoeing Access. There had been a meeting on Thursday 25th April and the following info was reported back to TP for member's info:

There is a new owner of the fishing rights on the river Wye on the section downstream of the Hollybush Pub on river right (paddlers). It had been noted that the owner was concerned about the level of usage from canoeing groups / hire and has reportedly not been forthcoming about allowing landing on the banks in the area. The Steering Group at the meeting appeared to be confident that the issues could be dealt with however, it should be noted that groups must adhere to the launching agreements / times at Glasbury and avoid antagonising any situation in the proximity of this area.

With regards to the river Usk – there is a small access/egress point in Gliffaes below Llangynidir that is primarily used for small groups and personal paddling but parking issues are potentially causing an impact on the Hotel Business who are the owners of the land and who provide the permissions. It should be noted that please avoid creating issues with parking, although it is possible that few groups / minibuses use this site as it is limited in capacity.

b) Tom's Tunnels – Cwm Clydach

TP reported some positive news on access in relation to Tom's Tunnels in the Clydach Gorge (near to the parking for Ogof Clogwyn) The area manager for Sustrans has stated that he is willing to create a space, enough to enter the tunnels at either end, when creating a barrier to prevent the public from entering the tunnels. He was supportive of the work we do with organised groups and understood our aims/objectives for wishing to access the tunnels.

c) Dinas Rock Abseil

Matt Woodfield updated members on the current situation on the facility to abseil at Dinas Rock main face. Following on from the email sent to ask members to stop using the site and removal of any anchors at the top there has been some developments which will result in access once again to the face. The central gully that was loose and eroding badly has now been stabilised by use of specialist matting which will, in time, allow the banks for the gully to regenerate and stabilise. There has been permission granted by NRW to work to BMC standards and place fixed anchors at the top and to the left of the face (as you look at it). This work will be carried out and report given to Paul Dann, NRW. Once these are in place guidance notes will be sent out to all members to let them know the work has been completed and the agreements in place for the use of the face / anchors. A short discussion was had about whether a climbing session (on the slabs) and an abseil sessions could now work hand in hand with multiple groups but the conclusion is still as previously noted – where groups are climbing underneath the abseil should not be used due to the possibility of material / equipment being dislodged down onto the group below. Members are asked to use courtesy and common sense when considering planning an abseil session at Dinas Rock at the new site.

d) Sychryd Gorge – Private Land, Mines and Tunnels, Village Hall and Access Rules

A lengthy discussion was had with members present in regards to the ongoing issues at Dinas Rock and the Sychryd Gorge. An update on the private land access was given by TP and it was stated that at present, the land owners are not agreeing to permit any groups to use their land. As co-ordinator, TP, reminded the land owners that all he can do is pass on the information to members and it was now up to our providers to decide how they operate in the gorge in relation to any 'alleged trespassing' whilst undertaking the activity. It was noted however, that with our terms of reference and also the environmental charter documents that we, as providers, should try and work with and not against landowners and that the gorge walking activity can still take place on NRW land, which accounts for a large proportion of the gorge. Members will be kept up to date in the next few months with any progress and developments. Also, members should be aware that if they experience any aggravation or altercation with the land owners when using the gorge on the 'permitted' land then they should report this to the co-ordinator, Paul Dann or if serious the local police representative (who is aware of this situation) by calling 101 or directly:
PC118 Mike Hapgood, Powys Neighborhood Policing Team, 01267 222020
michael.hapgood@dyfed-powys.pnn.police.uk

It was noted that the Mines and Tunnels Scheme had to be postponed as we currently have no access to the 2 silica mines in the Sychryd gorge. At present the Steering Group will be working to discuss the best way forward with gaining access to the mines as the mineral rights to the mines do not sit with the land owners and there is a possibility of gaining access to these through other routes. When the situation is resolved the SWOAPG will look at re-instating any mines inspection scheme as the present inspection reports are now over 2 years old.

With the activity season starting to reach its 'high season' there have already been a range of issues and possible infringements to the rules at Dinas Rock – including – groups over the permitted numbers, changing and nudity, car parking and conduct within the community / car parks. There was a lengthy discussion about the few activity providers who are not currently engaging with the agreements in place and how to deal with these issues as it is felt that access may be jeopardised if action is not taken. As a reminder, providers were reminded that any issues with a provider can be dealt with by face to face discussion (when appropriate) with the instructor on the day and also followed up by a report to the centre or business manager/owner. Concerns can also be reported to the co-ordinator or directly to Paul Dann, NRW but where possible, will need to detail the activity provider in question and be sure that the rules had been clearly broken. These issues can then be taken up directly with the provider through the enforcement policy as stated in the Dinas Access Rules 2012. Judith Harvey, BBNPA also suggested that where there is a clear knowledge or understanding of a provider intending to 'break the rules' then this info could be passed onto the volunteer wardens to collate independent evidence to support any claim or action. TP reminded all that the role of the volunteer warden was not to police our activities in the main but training had been delivered to help those volunteering better understand our position, concerns and rules / code of conduct of the area. Finally, members expressed that it was often hard to identify some providers as many operate from unmarked / branded vehicles and using freelance staff

Action: TP to explore the possibility of better enforcement and policing mechanisms at the next Steering Group meeting to report back to members

Finally, TP updated those present that the discussions with the Village Hall committee regarding improvement to the facility had broken down and become caught up in the committee of the village hall. As a suggestion, members should consider pairing up or sharing bookings with other providers to maximise the use of the hall and could help to stop the issues where only one provider can book the hall at any one time. Gary Evans explained that this had recently worked well for him working with the booking made by Call of the Wild for shared use of the hall.

8. Mellte Update:

TP alerted those present that the work on the production and printing of a Mellte Code of Conduct and Access Rules had been completed. The leaflets and rules were available for members to take at the meeting and the rules published on the SWOAPG website. Further copies of the leaflet can be obtained from the co-ordinator and will also be issued when the required training is delivered.

TP will be setting a series of compulsory training workshops for all leaders of groups in the Mellte gorge using the area for Gorge Walking and Adventure Days. These will be staged across the next few months allowing for all staff to make time to attend the sessions with a chance to review and amend the Code of Conduct and Rules in time for next activity season 2014. At this point photographs and evidence will be gathered to look at how certain areas and paths have improved or deteriorated which may result in paths and access being changed or removed.

To avoid the situation at the gorge from escalating into an environmental concern even further groups are being asked to adhere to the rules and Code of Conduct, where possible, observing the maximum group sizes and details such as 'no rope work' (abseiling, tyrolean crossing etc) until the full training programme has been implemented and the area is monitored and enforced in the similar manor to the Sychryd gorge.

ACTION: TP to notify members when the dates are set for the Mellte Instructor Code of Conduct Training Workshop.

9. Late Booking System, Gary Evans:

The Late Booking System was developed to provide visitors to South Wales an opportunity to participate in outdoor activity at late notice or if they were booking in small numbers / sole participant as it has been noted that many activity providers can not facilitate bookings for these clients. The very nature of visitors travel plans and booking means that we, as providers, needed to devise a method of accommodating the current trend to book last minute and also those who wish to participate in a small group.

The Late Booking System is a simplified web link: www.l8bsw.org.uk that is directed to a blind page on the SWOAPG website where a list of 3 duty providers is displayed with contact details. The specifics of the rota, system and process has been sent to all activity providers and also discussed at the last full meeting however it has been noted that some providers are still unclear on the web link and the process when referring people to the system when they can not facilitate a booking. To aid this, promotional magnets have been produced for members to place in an accessible location so that when the address is needed it can be to hand.

ACTION: TP to email all providers near the end of the current rota of providers (June/July) to invite new providers to join in the scheme

10. Progression of the Environmental Charter:

TP stated that the grant from NRW (was CCW) has been confirmed and there is a pot of £5000 available for the group to access to provide development to the Environmental Charter. This may include additional time for the group and co-ordinator but more widely spent on training and resources for the group and members to access.

The grant was secured on match funding from 4/5ths volunteering time (i.e. £4000) which was suggested as an achievable commitment given the level of support from previous poliot volunteering projects. We will continue to work with partners such as BBNPA, NRW, National

Trust and Sustrans to provide a programme of volunteering projects which will aim to meet the outcome of the grant relating the improvement of the environmental condition of our key activity sites.

On 23rd April a day was arranged at Sgwd Y Eira working with the BBNPA and well advertised and promoted however there was a limited turn out with support coming from 2 members and a team of volunteers provided by the Merthyr Branch of the Princess Trust. Although we were able, with hard graft, to achieve the outcome we really lacked support and man power at times to do some of the heavy lifting and carrying. In addition we could only claim a very small amount for the day which may result in a lack of spend for the group in this claim period.

Members at the meeting suggested that evenings would be a suitable time to arrange sessions and also Fridays were a common day that was more suitable for a greater attendance.

At the meeting TP was able to confirm that there were new Environmental Charter leaflets printed and that members would have to sign up to agree with the charter. Members at the meeting had the opportunity to do this and also take a set of leaflets for their staff to have and use. Members who sign up will receive a copy of the EC logo to use in their own marketing and promotion and will also be listed on the website as members who have signed up.

Leaflets will be deposited across the SWOAPG area at key locations for members to pick up and use. To find out more about the Charter, see a report from the volunteering day on the 23rd April and more please visit: www.swoapg.org.uk/index.php/environmental-charter/

ACTION: TP to invite all members to sign up to the Environmental Charter and suggest location where they can pick up the leaflets from.

Action: TP to arrange a set of dates for the 2013-14 periods aimed at Friday day times and evening dates with as much prior notice as possible to help work with member's availability.

11. Workshops 2013:

Jethro Moore noted to those present that there will be a Coasteering workshop based in the Ogmore area on the 3rd June 2013. Will Kilner also suggested a joint MTA/SWOAPG climbing workshop in the evening of the 7th June. Full details will be posted on the www.swoapg.org.uk website under the events section. Gorge walking will not feature in the first half of the 2013 period as there will be on-going training related to the Mellte Gorge and time will be left in the schedule to facilitate training related to the Environmental Charter development too. Full details will be sent to members at the necessary time.

12. The Mountain Training Association, Belinda Fear:

Belinda Fear delivered a presentation outlining the role and remit of the MTA and what the benefits are to members wishing to join the Association.

This presentation can be viewed by visiting: <http://www.swoapg.org.uk/index.php/members-area/meeting-minutes/>

13. Terms of Reference:

Matt Woodfleid asked the members present if they voted in favour of the updated Terms of Reference. There were no votes against and no votes abstaining. The updated Terms of Reference can be viewed here: <http://www.swoapg.org.uk/index.php/about-swoapg/terms-of-reference/>

14. AOB:

a) Alan Ward offered to provide a free half day BHF first aid refresher – members wishing to take up the offer should work on grouping together (perhaps through Facebook etc.) and provide a venue suitable for the training. Additionally Alan can provide a training course to allow instructors to deliver BHF Heart Start Awards to children, group and participants. – Alan Ward:

www.bigfootservices.co.uk

b) Gary Evans reminded all members present that the advertised opportunity for providers to showcase their provision and business at the annual Brecon Beacons National Park Society and Cotswolds Tent show was still available and would take place on the May Bank Holiday Sunday – 5th May 2013. Should any providers wish to take up the chance to deliver, advertise or present at the event, frequented by thousands of visitors, then they should contact the co-ordinator as a matter of urgency.

c) A question was raised about the timescale for the re-opening of BYG Car park – Paul Dann, NRW reported that the upper car park is open but the lower is closed as are the routes between them. Timescales are dependant on the contractors undertaking the work but expected to be 6-8 weeks and 2-3 weeks for the affected areas on the Taff Trail. The co-ordinator will be kept updated and alerts sent through the appropriate channels at the necessary time.

d) Hopkin Smith noted that Peter Cole of CRT (SWOAPG RTP Funder) has pledged on-going support for SWOAPG and that CADW have considered opening some of their sites for adventure activities (for a fee) e.g. Caerphilly Castle grounds.

Meeting Close:

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending, thanked Paul Dann, Natural Resources Wales for the venue and the guest speakers.

The next full meeting will be in October / November 2013.

The SWOAPG is supported by:

