



## 19<sup>th</sup> Full Meeting – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021, via *Teams* Video Conference

### Attendance

Zoe Anthony, Miskin	Brian Hanwell, NRW	Simon Piles, Royal Navy
Steve Bird, LoadedUK	Roger Lee, Independent (Chair)	Steve Rayner, Steve Rayner Outdoor Pursuits
Leila Connolly, The Outdoor Partnership (TOP)	Katie Lloyd, Princes Trust Cymru	Tom Sampson, Hampshire Mountain Centre
Paul Dann, Natural Resources Wales (NRW)	Bethan Logan, TOP	Mike Smith, Parkwood Outdoors Dolygaer
Steffan Davies, Hawk Adventures	Brett Mahoney, TOP	Mark Soanes, Call of the Wild Ltd
Simon Fenton, Gower Adventures	Jethro Moore, Adventure Beyond	Ieuan Starks, School Camp Ltd
Lee Garbett, Quest Adventure Activities Ltd	Ant Morgan, Ant Morgan Coaching	Dave Wainwright, Independent
Rhys Green, Green Ideas	Tom Partridge, Atlantic College	Paul Webb, H5 Adventures
Dave Grimes, Blue Dot Adventure	Ruth Peaden, Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust	

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

Roger opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and introduced representatives from NRW and The Outdoor Partnership (TOP).

Apologies had been received from:

Mick Collins, Outdoors@Hay	Richard Hill, Independent
Paul Donovan, Escape Routes	David Williams, NPTC group of colleges

### 2. Matters Arising from 2020 AGM

There were no matters arising from the 2020 AGM which were not already included on the agenda.

### 3. Overview of SWOAPG's recent & planned activity

Steve Rayner reminded attendees of SWOAPG's aim "to promote & develop sustainable outdoor activity provision in South Wales" then described the following activities from the last year:

- Access in Waterfall Country:
  - The Loonies' Leap track had been closed earlier in the year by a landslide and although requests had been made to NRW to open temporarily the river-left path for groups to use, this had not been forthcoming and groups were still being inconvenienced by having to return to Dinas over the hilltop.
  - The river-left owner at the Sychryd had earlier in the year requested that 'commercial' groups pay for jumping from 'his' side of the waterfall and SWOAPG had not received any subsequent reports or complaints on this issue.
  - SWOAPG had introduced this year a new online Code of Conduct training package, which was more accessible than the previous face-to-face workshops (although these are still available for organisations new to the gorges). This had expanded the training requirement from 'one person per organisation' to 'all leaders' and had received positive feedback and a good uptake (over 130 having completed the Sychryd course; and over 70 the Mellte course).
  - There have been problems this year in the gorges with litter and behaviour following the surge in public visitors. Lee Garbett explained a study he was undertaking to examine the impact of visitors on the gorge environment and suggested that Providers might be able to do more to help

mitigate their impact; including removing litter, discouraging the creation of rock-stacks; and asking groups not to wear sun-cream in the gorges. Dave Grimes added that the 'Meet and Greet' staff employed by the National Park Authority through Blue Dot Adventure, had also been removing large quantities of rubbish from the area. Brian Hanwell reported that NRW had located a skip at Gwaun Hepste and was open to other ideas to help with the situation. Paul Dann thanked Lee for all the work his company had been doing and echoed the concerns about rock-stacks. He also asked whether Providers could help to discourage public jumpers at Sgwd y Pannwr, perhaps by explaining how as Providers they ensured jumpers' safety through PPE and careful selection of jump sites (compared to the risks taken by ill-equipped jumpers on the waterfall itself, which had led to one fatality this year). Steve Rayner suggested that Lee could join the Steering Group to help SWOAPG take forward some of these ideas.

- Paddlesport Access on the River Wye Glasbury-Hay:

- SWOAPG has had no further contact with the Wye & Usk Foundation regarding its published 'arrangements' (which have not been agreed by SWOAPG) – although we noted that they were further amended earlier this year to prohibit winter paddling.
- Powys County Council had withdrawn launching from Glasbury Bont on 1 April while it conducts a Habitat Regulations Assessment. We understand that this has now started and SWOAPG has offered to discuss a Concordat-type arrangement with the council but is yet to receive a response. Meanwhile, NRW has continued to issue launch consent to private landowners (with 'new' restrictions). Dave Grimes noted that although Providers had stopped operating from the Bont, individuals had still been launching there over the summer (despite clear signage by the council).
- The knock-on effects of Providers moving downstream to Hay led to a meeting with Hay Town Council who agreed a range of measures with SWOAPG to minimise congestion and conflict. They also agreed to improve in due course the parking and launch area at 'The Gliss'.
- A Judicial Review was launched this year by a fishery owner into the launch consent issued by NRW to one operator: this has now been rejected by the courts who were not persuaded by the fishery owner's arguments.
- A "Wye Alliance" has been proposed to bring together all stakeholders (including SWOAPG), but has yet to meet

- Member Services:

- Membership numbers have been growing slowly post-Covid.
- We ran no training or networking workshops over the past year.
- We have continued regular communication with Members, including Covid-19 information, 'routine' activity alerts and messages – and a new 'job listing' service which has been taken up by several employers – using a website blog, e-mail newsletters, Facebook and Twitter; and have continued to manage routine Membership administration, enquiries, payments and issue of ID cards.

Category	2021	2020	2019
Full Member	63	55	75
Associate Member	14	14	15
Unpaid Members		28	
Additional Staff of Corporate Members	76	75	78
Youth Members	0	0	1
Supporters	31	30	30
Subscribers	208	72	66
'Old' Members still on Subscriber List	N/A	110	110

- 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 & UK Outdoors – feeding into Welsh Government Access Reform; 'Post-Covid Recovery'; and skills/qualifications reviews for our sector
- National Access Forum Wales – including Access to Water Group
- Regional Tourism Forums – feeding sector views to Visit Wales
- Brecon Beacons Local Access Forum and National Park Management Plan Stakeholder Reference Panel
- Brecon Beacons, Swansea Bay & Southwest Wales Tourism groups, feeding sector views to Visit Wales
- Waterfalls Area Safety Advisory Group
- The Outdoor Partnership South Wales Stakeholder Groups

- Welsh Government Access Reform:
  - The Access Reform 'Expert Groups' reported to the Minister in March, proposing changes in use of footpaths; activities on access land; and access to coast and cliffs (among other things) – and recommending further work on 'responsible recreation' and the definition of 'commercial use'. The Minister has yet to respond.
  - The National Access Forum's *Access to Water Group* also reported in March, recommending further work to pilot a new approach to Voluntary Access Arrangements for inland waters in Wales – underpinned by a paid 'waterways licence' (a condition insisted upon by the landowner representatives). However, the Minister has rejected the concept of payment by paddlers and has asked to meet to discuss 'next steps'.
  - Farmers are to be rewarded financially for improving public access in the new Sustainable Farming Scheme (being introduced from 2025). There are no details yet, but this might include access to water.

#### 4. The Outdoor Partnership in South Wales

Brett Mahoney and Bethan Logan gave a presentation on The Outdoor Partnership's new project to extend its coverage to South Wales (see attached slides). In summary, the project:

- aims to provide opportunities for local residents to get involved with outdoor activity (as shown in the table);
- is funded for 2 years – with the hope of further funding after this;
- employs 4 Development Officers (Swansea Bay region, mid-Wales, Gwent and South Central Wales); and
- will be revealing its development plans for each region later this week.

More people participating in outdoor activities locally.
Increase in social prescribing of outdoor activities.
More Schools and FE engaged and providing outdoor education.
Increased school – club links.
More volunteers with nationally recognised qualifications locally.
More inclusive outdoor sector.
More 'NEET' (Young people not in education, employment or training) people progressing into sustained 'EET'.
Improvement to health, social, environmental and economic wellbeing of local people.

Steve Rayner agreed to circulate project information and opportunities to SWOAPG Members as they arise.

#### 5. Annual Report & Accounts

Steve Rayner explained that he didn't intend to go through the Annual Report or Accounts in detail since copies had been published on the SWOAPG website.

He then presented the accounts to 31 July 2021, explaining that we had a surplus this year due to increasing membership income and reduced Coordinator costs (because he has 'donated' considerable time this year funded by a Government self-employment grant).

While we do now have some confidence in future membership income, future funding remains a risk that the Directors will continue to monitor closely

Roger and Mark thanked Steve for all his work this year and leuan for his support with managing finances.

	2020-21	2019-20
<b>Income &amp; Revenue</b>	<b>£ 6,642</b>	<b>£ 4,086</b>
Membership Fees	£ 6,342	£ 4,035
Workshop / Project Fees	£ 300	£ 50
Bank Interest		£ 1
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£ 5,263</b>	<b>£ 7,189</b>
Co-ordinator fees	£ 3,904	£ 5,812
Membership costs	£ 83	£ 128
Workshop / Project costs	£ 25	£ 100
Payment Processing Fees	£ 216	£ 136
IT	£ 357	£ 386
Insurance	£ 621	£ 577
Administration / Miscellaneous	£ 58	£ 50
<b>Income less Expenditure</b>	<b>£ 1,379</b>	<b>£ - 3,103</b>

#### 6. Election of Steering Group, Directors and Chairperson

Steve Rayner explained that the Terms of Reference required one-third of the Steering Group (those who've served longest) to 'retire' each year. Roger Lee, Will Kilner and Neil were all retiring, but Dave Grimes, Mike Smith and Lee Garbett had been nominated to take their places on the Steering Group – and Dave Grimes and Jet Moore had agreed to stand as Directors (along with Steve Bird who'd been co-opted earlier in the year but now needed to be elected formally). They were all elected unanimously by the meeting.

Steve thanked Roger for having steered SWOAPG as our Chair for the last 18 months and explained that Mark Soanes would be acting as Chair until the Directors had the opportunity to appoint someone formally to this role.

## **7. 2022 Membership Fees**

Steve Rayner announced that the Steering Group was not proposing any change to Membership fees other than the inflationary increase that was agreed at 2018 EGM (linked to Consumer Prices Index), resulting in fees for 2022 of £82 for Full members and £28 for Associate Members.

## **8. Q&A Session**

Mike Smith reported that Pontsticill and Pentwyn Reservoirs were currently closed due to blue-green algae, although he had only been aware of this by NRW and there had been no communication on this from Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW). Mike added that he was trying to re-establish working contact with DCWW.

There were no further questions raised by Members.

Roger thanked Steve Rayner for organising the AGM and Mark for agreeing to step-in as Acting Chair – and everyone else for taking the time to attend the meeting.