



20th Full Meeting – 22nd November 2022, via *Teams* Video Conference

Attendance

Rae Hardy, Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust
 Lee Garbett, Quest Adventure Activities
 Richard Hill, caving.training
 Rhys Green, Green Ideas
 Dave Grimes, Blue Dot Adventure

Brian Hanwell, Natural Resources Wales
 James Martin, Call of the Wild
 Jethro Moore, Adventure Beyond
 Ant Morgan, Ant Morgan Coaching
 Wyn Owen, ScoutsCymru

Matt Perrott, Parkwood Outdoors Dolygaer
 Steve Rayner, SWOAPG Coordinator
 Peter Savage, Savage Adventures
 Mark Soanes, Call of the Wild (Chair)

1. Welcome and Apologies

Mark opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

Apologies had been received from:

Zoe Anthony, Miskin
 Steve Bird, LoadedUK
 Justin Bradley, Trewern OEC
 Jeff Calligan, Mountain & River Activities

Paul Dann, Natural Resources Wales
 Steffan Davies, Hawk Adventures
 Gary Evans, Gary Evans Outdoors

Chris Pierce, Oxfordshire Outdoors
 Mike Smith, Parkwood Outdoors Dolygaer
 Ieuan Starks, School Camp

2. Matters Arising from 2021 AGM

There were no matters arising from the 2021 AGM which were not already included on the agenda.

3. Overview of SWOAPG's recent & planned activity

Steve 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 and intentions for the next:

- Access in Waterfall Country:
 - The Loonies' Leap track is still closed from last year's landslide, but Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) does intend to repair this in due course. Although requests have been made repeatedly to NRW to open temporarily the river-left path for groups to use, this has not been forthcoming and groups are still being inconvenienced by having to return to Dinas over the hilltop.
 - Trees blocking the top waterfall pool on the Sychryd have been reported to NRW who had intended to leave these for the winter floods – but Brian reported that these would now be removed alongside other tree work by February 2023, for which Steve thanked him.
 - The river-left owner at the Sychryd has not raised any further complaints this year.
 - BBNPA was proposing to modify various footpaths in Waterfall Country, which should not affect access for groups. Brian confirmed that this was largely a 'tidying-up' exercise to align the rights of way with the actual paths on the ground, although it would also extinguish the 'precipice path' and the path crossing the river above Sgwd Clun Gwyn Isaf.
 - The greatest issue in the Mellte gorge this season had been the impact of tourist behaviour and littering, which had been raised at last year's AGM and addressed by a face-to-face workshop with providers, NRW and BBNPA in February and a follow-up meeting in the summer.
 - An 'end-of-season review meeting' is scheduled with NRW and BBNPA on 2 December when all these matters will be discussed.

- SWOAPG had updated its online Code of Conduct training package this year, which has continued to receive positive feedback and a good uptake (over 250 having completed the Sychryd course; and over 80 the Mellte course – compared with 130 and 70 last year). James Martin asked whether a face-to-face training session could be arranged for staff who found the online training difficult; Steve offered to organise a session for Call of the Wild staff.
- Paddlesport Access on the River Wye Glasbury-Hay:
 - Powys County Council will be publishing its Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) ‘imminently’, some 20 months after launching banned at Glasbury Bont; and has pencilled-in a meeting to discuss this with providers on 8th or 9th December (Steve explained that he is still awaiting response from operators before confirming the meeting date time – although it is likely to be in the evening).
 - Hay Town Council had ascertained that it must also conduct a HRA and had received advice on this from NRW, but SWOAPG has had no contact with them since March when they abandoned plans for operators to sign-up to a Code of Conduct for operations at The Gliss.
 - SWOAPG has now started work on developing a concordat arrangement in partnership with Powys County Council, based on the format of the Waterfall Country gorge-walking concordat with voluntary sign-up by providers supported by information resources and online training. Grant funding has been secured for the setup costs from both The Canoe Foundation (British Canoeing’s charitable arm) and Powys County Council. The Council’s intention is that the concordat should cover all groups using Glasbury Bont and should be in place by Easter 2023. It could be extended to cover The Gliss if Hay Town Council wished to get involved. We are awaiting the detail of restrictions that might be imposed by the HRA but are at least anticipating (from earlier NRW advice) a ‘ban’ on unguided hire craft in May and June as well as elements from the Council’s 2017 Code of Conduct – which will require detailed consideration before any concordat can be agreed. The governance arrangements for this project also need to be confirmed: SWOAPG has established an Advisory Group comprising a wide range of paddlesport operators (some of whom are not SWOAPG Members) and the roles and responsibilities of this group in relation to the Council and the SWOAPG Steering Group and Board of Directors still needs to be clarified.
 - The “Wye Alliance” which was proposed last year to bring together all stakeholders did not materialise; and SWOAPG has had no further contact with the Wye & Usk Foundation regarding its published ‘voluntary access arrangement’, which fishery owners had been keen to promote.

- Member Services:

- Membership numbers have still been growing slowly post-Covid.
- We have continued regular communication with Members, including ‘routine’ activity alerts and messages using a website blog, e-mail newsletters, Facebook and Twitter (although software upgrades have meant we can no longer generate automated weekly jobs and events lists); and have continued to manage routine membership administration, enquiries, payments and issue of ID cards.
- We ran no CPD (Continuing Professional & Development) workshops over the past year, but Steve emphasised their importance as part of SWOAPG’s aim to promote sustainable outdoor activity provision by ‘adding value’ to instructors’ roles. He had recently issued a survey to 400 instructors to gauge interest but had, disappointingly, received only 15 responses. These showed that there was at least some interest in workshops addressing river, mountain and gorge ecology and geology – particularly focused on the Usk, Brecon Beacons and Blaen-y-Glyn gorge – and a spread of preferences for evening and daytime, both midweek and weekend. He had received strong support from BBNPA staff who were willing to offer their expertise and had also suggested a role for providers in surveying and monitoring the condition of flora, fauna and historic and geological features ‘on the ground’ and in promoting the online BBNPA Ambassador course. Meeting attendees encouraged Steve to press-ahead with a programme of monthly workshops during the first quarter of 2023.

Category	2022	2021	2020	2019
Full Member	69	63	55	75
Associate Member	13	14	14	15
Unpaid Members			28	
Additional Staff of Corporate Members	82	76	75	78
Youth Members	1	0	0	1
Supporters	31	31	30	30
Subscribers	220	208	72	66
‘Old’ Members still on Subscriber List	N/A	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; the Senedd Cross-Party Group for the Outdoor Activity Sector; and skills/qualifications reviews for our sector
 - National Access Forum Wales – including its Access to Water Group
 - Regional Tourism Forums – feeding sector views to Visit Wales
 - Brecon Beacons Local Access Forum, National Park Management Plan Stakeholder Reference Panel & Geopark Management Group
 - 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
- Outdoor Alliance Wales Update:
 - Steve explained that the Outdoor Alliance Wales (of which SWOAPG is an active member) has already helped to achieve collaborative engagement across our sector, thanks largely to the tireless work of Paul Donovan and member organisations. Paul and the OAW have been active in:
 - pressing Welsh Government Ministers for action on Access Reform – with meetings be arranged following changes of ministerial responsibilities;
 - initiating the Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill, being prepared and presented to Senedd with the aim of securing a mandatory week-long residential visit during everyone's school journey in Wales;
 - pursuing the industry-led alternative to AALA being prepared by Adventure UK for public consultation in March 2023; and
 - creating and supporting the Senedd's Cross Party Group (CPG) for the Outdoor Activity Sector in Wales, which has already raised the profile of our sector with MSs around both access and outdoor education.

4. Annual Report & Accounts

Steve 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 2022, explaining that we deliberately had a small deficit this year to enable us to reclaim tax paid last year.

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

5. Election of Steering Group, Directors and Chairperson

Steve explained that the Terms of Reference required one-third of the Steering Group and Board of Directors (those who've served longest) to 'retire' each year. Simon Fenton, Ieuan Starks and Mark Soanes were all retiring, but Peter Jeffery needed to be elected formally following his co-option last year; Mark Soanes was standing for re-election and Ant Morgan had offered to join the Steering Group. They were all elected unanimously by the meeting.

Steve explained that Mark Soanes would continue to act as Chair until the Directors had the opportunity to appoint someone formally to this role.

6. 2023 Membership Fees

Mark 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 2023 of £89 for Full members and £30 for Associate Members. He explained that this was necessary to help us meet our own increasing costs but recognised that this might lead to some Members choosing not to renew next year. He also made a plea for volunteers to consider taking on some tasks that would free-up the Coordinator's time, while acknowledging that everyone in the industry is stretched at the moment.

	2021-2	2020-21
Income & Revenue	£ 6,158	£ 6,642
Membership Fees	£ 6,158	£ 6,342
Workshop / Project Fees		£ 300
Bank Interest		
Expenditure	£6, 803	£ 5,263
Co-ordinator fees	£ 4,826	£ 3,904
Membership costs	£ 88	£ 83
Workshop / Project costs		£ 25
Payment Processing Fees	£ 201	£ 216
IT	£ 494	£ 357
Insurance	£ 1,105	£ 621
Administration / Miscellaneous	£ 89	£ 58
Income less Expenditure	£ -645	£ 1,379

7. Q&A Session

Mark reported that the new committee for Pontneddfechan Village Hall was seeking to increase community use of the hall at weekends, which might restrict its availability for providers; and suggested that Steve make contact with the new committee.

Jet suggested that 2023 was likely to see similar school groups but less tourists visiting providers in South Wales – and that staffing was likely to remain our sector's 'big issue' next year (although a new apprenticeship scheme might offer a glimmer of hope).

There were no further questions raised by Members.

Dave thanked Steve and Mark for their time in organising the meeting and Steve thanked everyone else for taking the time to attend.