

Mellte River Gorge Access Rules for Outdoor Activity Providers

*****Groups undertaking a full descent of the river to finish in the Dinas Rock area must also adhere to the Access Rules and Code of Conduct for Dinas Area*****

NB all Providers using the Mellte Gorge under these arrangements MUST:

- ***agree formally to operate gorge walking in accordance with the terms of the NRW Activity Access Concordat and Code of Conduct and agree that SWOAPG may sign the Concordat with NRW on their behalf;***
- ***undertake to ensure that all gorge-walking leaders have undertaken the most recent SWOAPG Code of Conduct Training for the Mellte Gorge;***
- ***maintain public liability insurance of at least £5 million covering all adventurous activities provided in the Area; and***
- ***either hold an AALA licence for the activity or provide details of a suitable Technical Advisor who has witnessed the Provider in evidencing satisfactory policies and procedures and in the safe delivery of Gorge Walking activity at the site.***

As the demand on our natural resources grows with the increasing demand for adrenaline, adventure and educational activities, we find ourselves as activity providers, to be both reactive and pro-active to the situation we face in our river gorges in South Wales.

The Mellte is one of the most environmentally sensitive places in South Wales due to its diverse micro-climate and the richness of the eco-systems within it. In addition, the extreme beauty, remoteness and scenery of the area makes this very popular with visitors, hill walkers, photographers and a range of outdoor enthusiasts.

Although this area is less populated and it would appear that the presence of a local community is not as prevalent as at Dinas Rock, we do still need to be very mindful of our impact on the local residents, shops and landowners in the area and also on the members of the public who come to this area to experience the wildlife, scenery and waterfalls.

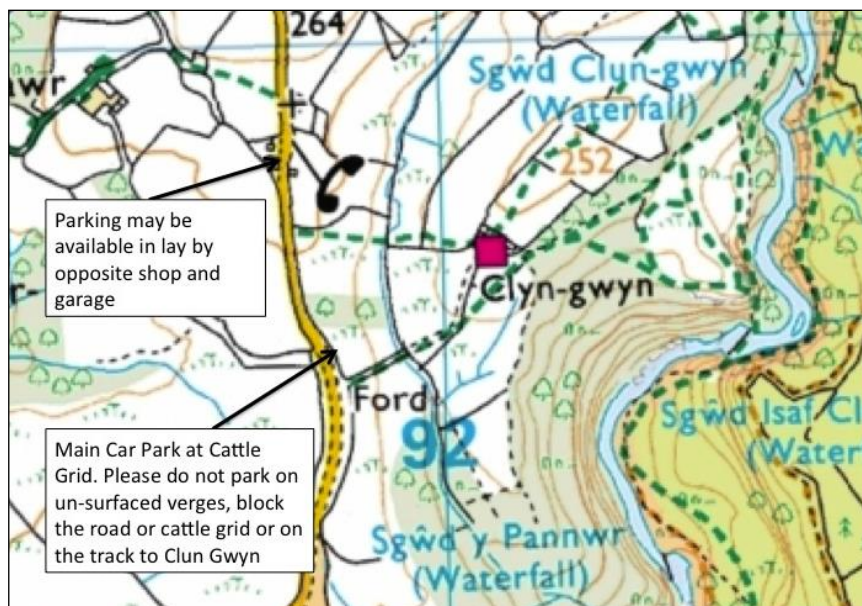
In line with the access requirements for Dinas Rock and the Sychryd Gorge, we have put in place a Code of Conduct for the Mellte River, specific training requirements for leaders and also a set of rules to follow to ensure that activity providers work in a sustainable way to both preserve our natural resources and also meet the business / educational needs of our providers

This set of rules is for the River Mellte from the upstream footbridge at Clun Gwyn to the confluence with the Sychryd at Dinas Rock. Where groups are undertaking a full descent of the river to finish in the Dinas Rock area, the access rules and Code of Conduct (and related training) must also be adhered to.

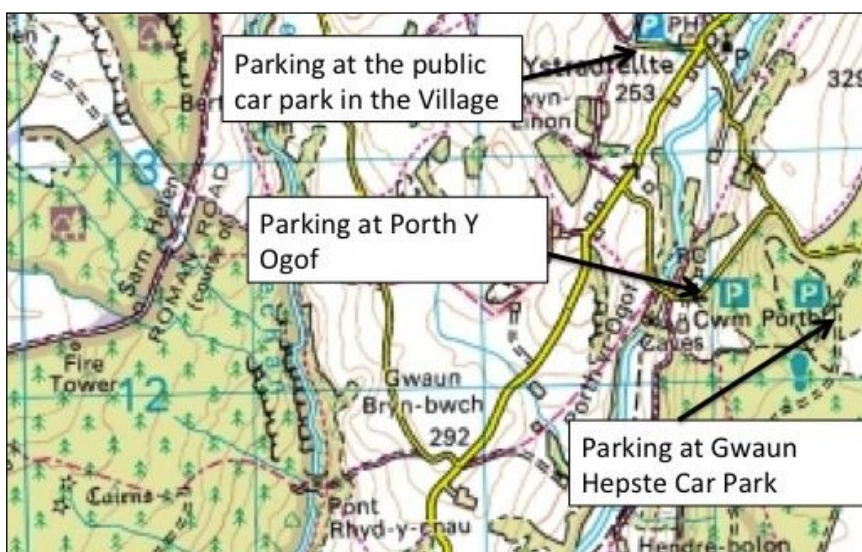
1. Parking & Traffic

- a. **Avoid irresponsible parking** at all times – parking spaces at Clun Gwyn Cattle Grid are limited and will be especially busy on weekends and summer months – when parking may also be available in **farmers' fields** for a fee.
- b. **No parking on double yellow lines or on un-surfaced verges.**
- c. **At weekends, bank holidays and when the area is seen to be busy, follow the advisory one-way system** to help reduce the congestion around Cwm Porth (and use your discretion at other times).

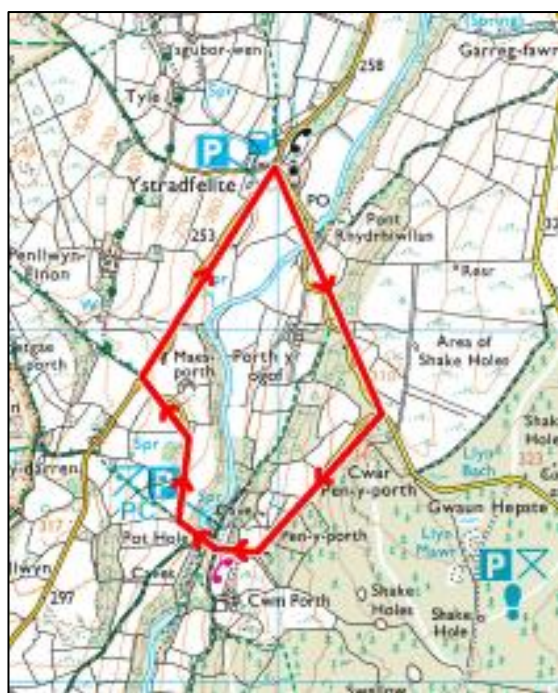
Suggested Parking



Suggested Alternative Parking



Cwm Porth Advisory One-Way System



2. Changing

- a. In the Clun Gwyn car park, ensure your groups change sensitively using vehicles or shelters to change behind. Please remember that visitors to the site do not expect to see public nudity. Where possible arrive at the site already changed or use the **Changing Screens** in Porth Yr Ogof car park or the Dell next to the main car park at Dinas Rock.
- b. In the Village Hall car park, **no changing is permitted**. Either use the Village Hall for changing or send your group to the changing screens in the Dinas Rock Main Car Park.
- c. **Avoid changing in front of the shop and residents' houses at all times**
- d. **Brief groups properly** to ensure changing takes place in designated places at all times

3. Toilets

- a. Do not use the car parks as toilets. Use toilet facilities at Porth Yr Ogof, The Angel Inn **Public Toilets**, or the **Village Hall** if it's open (but please respect other hall users).

4. Numbers

- a. **Maximum Numbers** – The maximum group size is 16 plus staff with a maximum total number per organisation per day of 48 plus staff

The numbers and group sizes will be reviewed on an annual basis allowing/utilizing data gathered from monitoring points on the site to inform decision making. Monitoring points will be established in areas that are of concern to NRW. It is therefore essential that the gorge-walking code be followed so that the environmental condition of the site is improved.

5. Identification of Groups

- a. **Gorge-walking groups must display valid SWOAPG ID cards** prominently (so that the side showing the business / organisation name is visible) whenever operating in the gorges: (i) in each vehicle parked in the vicinity of the gorge; and (ii) on each Group Leader in the gorge – for example attached to the leaders' bodies, bags or buoyancy aids.
- b. Wherever practicable, group members should have the business / organisation name clearly marked on the outside of their buoyancy aids.

6. Other

- a. keep **noise levels to a minimum** and avoid bad language. Remember that noise carries in these areas and this is an area of beauty enjoyed by many people including families and children.
- b. **No Litter** - pick up yours and any other litter you find. Take all rubbish (and clothing) home with you.
- c. **Check all of the car parks and changing areas** for litter and forgotten equipment once your Group has finished changing. Carrying black bags and protective gloves will help with this.

Advice

- The main Clun Gwyn car park is nearly always full after 11.00am on a summer weekend. If arriving after 11.00, **consider another venue** or drop your group off and park the vehicle at one of the suggested alternative parking areas.
- Arrange a **meeting place** for Gorge Clients and then bring the minimum vehicles to the parking area and also the car park at the Dinas end of the gorge (if undertaking full descent)
- Park efficiently in the Car Parks, avoid wasting parking space
- Encourage clients to **car share** from their point of departure
- Consider Centre Bus Sharing if possible
- Consider the **use of other sites or alternative Activities** to prevent over-use of the Gorge and Area
- Set up your own '**Acceptable behaviour contract**' for your Groups
- NRW have issued a letter to clarify the issues relating to **sub-contracting** in relation to gorge walking (Appendix 1)
- For **Pontneddfechan Village Hall** enquiries and bookings, contact PNV-VH-Bookings@groups.outlook.com (NB if your e-mail bounces-back, please let SWOAPG know so we can ask the committee to 'whitelist' your e-mail).

Enforcement Policy

Should a Provider break any of the rules and there is no doubt about who they are, then:

First Transgression of the year –

NRW will write to the provider with a warning that they are known to have broken the rules and should take steps to prevent this from happening again.

Second Transgression of the Year-

NRW will contact the provider and inform them that they will need to submit an improvement plan within 14 days if they wish to continue to use the gorge under the concordat.

Third transgression of the year –

SWOAPG will no longer recognise the provider as signed up to the concordat and will inform NRW of this. NRW will send the provider details of the alternative access arrangement for use of the gorge outside of the concordat.



Dear Provider,

I have been asked by the South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group (SWOAPG) to give some clarification on the issue of subcontracting in relation to Gorge Walking.

Subcontracting-in an instructor from another provider or a freelancer in order to use the subcontractor's group number allowance in the gorge and therefore exceed the session limit is against the rules.

Passing on part of a larger booking is allowed as long as the booking is fully transferred to another organisation.

This means that the following points must be met:

- The booking, payment arrangements and invoice must be passed over to the receiving organisation
- The group must be briefed separately
- The group must be managed separately within the gorge
- The group must be insured separately and hold the consent/medical forms for the individuals within its group
- For under 18's both companies must hold a valid AALA licence
- Each company must use its own safety equipment, unless this is hired.

I am aware that some organisations go to great lengths in order to stay within the rules, such as offering alternative activities for part of a group or splitting the group into sessions and using climbing, caving or walking as an alternative.

I hope that this provides some clarification.

Yours Sincerely

Paul Dann

Local Area Manager

For and on behalf of Forest District Manager

Ffôn/Tel 0300 068 0278

Epost/Email paul.dann@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

www.cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

Natural Resources Wales, Llanfair Road, Llandovery, SA20 0AL

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg

Correspondence welcomed in Welsh and English