

# Volunteer Forum Meeting: Minutes

Mon 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1.30-3.30pm, Llanion

**Present:**, Helen Clarke, Karin Howells, Jon King, Granville Watson, Dave Fisher, Michele Chung, Rebecca Evans (RE), Sally Boyton (SB)

**Apologies:** Gordon Lewis, Roy Partington, Jan Millward, Tetiana Bondarenko, Madeleine Bland, Hywel Mansell, Ellie Sherwin

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

**2. Follow up from previous meeting.**

**Rebecca updated members on issues from previous meeting:**

<b>Update</b>	<b>Action</b>
An <b>organisational chart</b> to outline staff roles remains in progress	A comprehensive up to date chart to be circulated when possible.
<p><b>Footpath monitoring</b>                      Roy and Jon suggested that the Pathways team could potentially attend to ad hoc maintenance issues on an ‘on call’ basis if the warden team are open to working together. This would also help fill the gaps when Pathways sessions aren’t running due to annual leave.                      Jon also suggested holding an event for footpath monitors to get together, meet each other, discuss the types of issues being reported and to promote standardisation in reporting</p>	<p>RE has raised this with the warden team – no direct action confirmed as yet .</p> <p>RE to raise with Chris T and suggest an annual get together</p>
<p><b>Independent volunteering</b>                      Rebecca shared information on the success of Nature Networks funding for a project called Cysylltu Natur 25x25 which will involve working to aid nature recovery across 25% of the North of the National Park, helping species and habitats to thrive, and continuing to support farmers and smallholders using traditional farming techniques to conserve nature. This will generate some new volunteering opportunities</p>	RE/SB to share details of new volunteering opportunities when available.
<p><b>Uniform</b>                      A selection of long-sleeved t-shirt samples were reviewed during the meeting to gather feedback from forum members to understand suitability for the volunteering tasks across the Park.</p>	RE to progress with organising long-sleeved t-shirts which will be offered to new volunteers as an alternative uniform option to the short sleeved polo shirt. Existing volunteers may also be able to have a long-sleeved shirt, depending on their role.

<p><b>Training</b> Autism Awareness training was delivered in Dec 2023. Emergency First Aid training was delivered in Feb 2024. Interest in acquiring First Aid skills was high and there may be potential to fill a 2<sup>nd</sup> course during 2024.</p>	RE to report back when further opportunities for First Aid and Autism/Learning Disabilities awareness become available.
Resources from the tree ID training course were circulated in July as requested.	Advanced tree training to be explored.
<p><b>Dry venue for wet weather Pathways sessions</b> The provision of a venue to house the Pathways group to enable activities and participant support to continue in wet weather hasn't yet been confirmed.</p> <p>Granville raised concern that the lack of dry venue means that the 'wellbeing' objectives of the Pathways project aren't being met and noted that the continuous wet weather is clearly demotivating participants, particularly those who require additional support. Wet weather often results in session cancellations, or if sessions do go ahead the constant rain and mud is having a negative impact on wellbeing. Everyone agreed an indoor space is a high priority for the project, especially before next Winter.</p>	RE to consult with management teams to establish whether there is a plan to provide a dry venue moving forward.
<p><b>Dogs on public walks</b> A reminder about the Countryside Code was circulated in the March 2024 volunteering update.</p>	

### 3. National Park Management Plan

Michel Regelous (Management Plan and Marine Officer) presented an overview of the National Park Management Plan which explores the special qualities of the Park, engages with key stakeholders to establish what is needed to sustain a quality environment for all and coordinates the effort required to meet the objectives agreed. Consultation is currently in progress to gather feedback from a wide section of society to develop the plan for the next 4 years.

Post-presentation discussion outlined the importance of volunteers as a key stakeholder and Forum members were encouraged to participate in the consultation through completion of the online survey. A link to the consultation will also be included in the April Volunteering Update inviting the full volunteering workforce to take part.

### 4. Updates and issues from Forum members

Issue / update	Action
<p><b>Youth Rangers</b> Youth Ranger Michele Chung shared that the youth rangers are enjoying their time working on a variety of activities. They are currently enjoying collaborating with Brecon Beacons National</p>	RE invited Michele to provide a written summary for a future volunteering update if she

<p>Park youth team to discuss and share improved ways of working following a recent Residential programme.</p>	<p>would like to share more about this exciting initiative.</p>
<p><b>Footpath Monitoring updates</b>  Karin Howells shared is continuing to enjoy her role in Footpath Monitoring and highlighted a few challenges experienced with the App used by the team (these have already been noted by Ranger Chris Taylor).</p> <p>She feels there is a communication gap regarding the timescale, between when footpath issues are reported and when they are resolved, meaning she is often unsure whether specific issues are ‘in hand’ or have been forgotten. Karin enquired if it would be possible to know when certain jobs are complete.</p> <p>Rebecca clarified that issues submitted via the App are picked up by the warden teams and prioritised based on various factors so there should be no concern if a specific issue isn’t resolved immediately. Unfortunately, full transparency of job status isn’t available in the off-the-shelf App.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>
<p><b>Session attendance</b>  David Fisher noted the continued occurrence of certain volunteers being unclear as to whether they will be attending specific volunteering sessions, with many failing to attend (with no communication) or cancelling last minute. He suggested that the Volunteer Charter should be highlighted to volunteers again with a request for all volunteers to commit to informing their line manager if they are unable to attend. All agreed.</p>	<p>RE/SB to highlight this in a future volunteering update.</p>
<p><b>Uniform</b>  David Fisher shared that the fleece-lined jackets provided to some volunteers are too hot for working in. Waterproof trousers were also discussed and the consensus was that these should be provided by the volunteer if required in extreme conditions.</p>	
<p><b>North West Voluntary Wardens</b>  David shared that the North West voluntary team is now thriving and happily working with Meg and Matt following the welcome of four new recruits.</p>	
<p><b>Pathways sessions</b>  Jon King summarised the work activities undertaken by the Pathways group including hedge laying, scrub clearance and post &amp; rail fencing. They enjoyed their annual gathering in January at Sunnyhill and several volunteers joined the autism awareness training. 6 Pathways sessions hadn’t been able to</p>	

run due to poor weather conditions.	
<p><b>Archaeology Tool Cataloguing</b></p> <p>Jon King updated on the set up of a cataloguing system for the archaeological tools at Castell Henllys. He reported he was part way through the process and enjoying the challenge – he felt surprised by the manual tasks involved in moving and sorting various storage boxes. It was agreed that future volunteering roles could include more detail about what is involved.</p>	
<p><b>North Voluntary Wardens</b></p> <p>Granville provided a detailed update which included details of all the tasks the North group had undertaken, mainly relating to habitat creation, access and tree planting and maintenance.</p> <p>Volunteer Changes: Richard, Fiona and Andy have left the group (Andy is assisting at Castlemartin) Mark Rutter and Dr Jon King have joined our merry band.</p>	
<p><b>Carew Castle</b></p> <p>Helen Clarke reported on the successful progress of various work tasks delivered at Carew Castle including the renovation of the trebuchet, painting of the mill, tree planting and more.</p>	
<p><b>Manual Handling training</b></p> <p>Forum members agreed that they feel the level of Health &amp; Safety practice within PCNPA volunteering is generally very good. Helen suggested that some volunteers would like an introduction to manual handling or perhaps a more interactive way of learning about the basics.</p>	Helen to check with Carew volunteers on the preferred format of learning.
<p><b>South Voluntary Wardens</b></p> <p>Karin shared progress on activity in the South including planting at Dewslake, a Christmas social gathering, pond digging at Tabernacle Gardens and planting snowdrops at Llanion HQ.</p>	
Ellie also enquired about follow up activity from the Lost Words poetry boxes and how this was going to be recorded/showcased online.	RE to check planned Lost Words activity with Comms team.

## 5. Updates from PCNPA

### Volunteer Talks

Sal and Rebecca shared the success of two volunteer hosted talks during February and March 2024, which were well attended by volunteers, staff members and members of Pembrokeshire Coast Trust. They extended thanks to Vicky Tomlinson

for her virtual tour around Castlemartin Range and Mike Davies for his virtual tour from the coast of Argentina to South Georgia and the Antarctica peninsular.

### **Parking Passes**

Now in circulation to the appropriate volunteers and line managers.

### **ID Badges**

Sal presented the new format badge and confirmed that these would be in circulation via line managers or directly over the forthcoming weeks. Badges were handed to Forum members present on the day.

### **Volunteer Benefits**

Rebecca confirmed that details for volunteer benefits during 2024 were nearly finalised and would be confirmed in the next volunteering update.

### **2024 Volunteer celebration**

Open discussion invited further ideas for the preferred format and venue of the 2024 celebration. Carew Castle and Lesser Hall was highlighted as an idea for wet weather. 'Humorous' volunteer awards was discussed favourably to introduce a fun, light hearted element to the day. It was agreed that a suitable time needed to be found to cater for all groups including youth rangers and participants who require additional support. Further discussions to be initiated by Rebecca and Sal.

### **Volunteering Week**

Rebecca reminded members of Volunteering Week on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 and encouraged feedback on preferences for specific activities that could be run to represent the Park. The Invasive Non-Native Species project (INNS) was discussed and potential of highlighting this as an area of education and community involvement.

### **Volunteer Handbook**

Rebecca shared that the current handbook is being updated into an easy-read version to improve accessibility for all. Forum members agreed to participate as a 'sounding board' when the first draft is available. The intention is to provide the new handbook in digital format and a paper version for those who request it.

### **Better Impact – Logging Hours**

Rebecca confirmed that all volunteering hours contributed from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 are to be submitted via the Better Impact system. Independent volunteers will be guided to do this using step-by-step instructions and volunteer line managers will be guided to log hours for multiple volunteers using a similar format.

## **6. AOB**

No further items raised.