

National Access Forum Written Contributions

NAFW 77: 5 March 2024

Introduction

This note is collated and edited by NRW from submissions from Forum members and NRW staff prior to National Access Forum Meetings to facilitate the sharing of information.

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Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water: Jen Newman, Visitor Experience Manager for Elan Valley

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General interest

Lisvane and Llanishen, North Cardiff

Following the successful opening of Llanishen and Lisvane visitor and the instant success of the open water swimming, the team identified that there was a large demographic not being given access to the water, mainly open water dippers or cold water dippers who opt to not swim long distance in wetsuits but rather “dip” or short swim without wetsuits, in cold water.

Atlantic crest (The company that provides Dŵr Cymru with our lifeguard qualifications) headed up by Dr Cliff Nelson, formerly of the RLSS was engaged to provide and deliver an Open/ Cold water dipping pilot.

The pilot consisted of a literature review of the most up to date science around cold water swimming, Risk assessments and operating procedures, additional training for our onsite trainers and lifeguards and finally the creation of an “introduction to cold water” course, that once completed gives swimmers access to publicly available OWD/CWD sessions soon to be rolled out across multiple Welsh water sites.

The course centres on educating and preparing swimmers for the risks of cold-water swimming and how they can identify and manage hazards both at Welsh water sites and at public venues should they choose not to attend our sites. The course is accredited by the institute of outdoor learning and comes with a certificate of completion.

We then offered two free to attend pilot sessions where the course was run to local dipping clubs and some members of DCWW staff.

Over 3 sessions 40+ people attended, and the feedback was glowing. Participants were encouraged to feedback on the content and the delivery, and the feedback has already helped us to make some small changes to help the course delivery and ensure the content is engaging.

We are now in the final stages of the pilot and are in the process of engaging with some local fitness influencers and BBC Wales online to launch the dipping alongside a programme of sessions that will be available to the public.

We are exciting for the future of swimming at Lisvane and Llanishen with the potential for work with charities, social prescribing and we are confident that OWD/CWD will bring a great benefit to the community.

Funding & Resources

Llys y Fran – The Woodland Investment Grant (TWIG)

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water has received funding from The Woodland Investment Grant (TWIG), through the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which will enable it to:

- Planting an additional 1,000 native broadleaf trees to enhance the forest around the reservoir with a view to achieving a National Forest of Wales status.
- Improve the accessibility around our main reservoir track, with the introduction of bridges and culverts over inlets.
- Build a forest school which will support the rangers to deliver courses in line with the national curriculum.
- Adding additional interpretation signage around the main track, with information and wildlife on site.

Llandegfedd Reservoir – The Woodland Investment Grant (TWIG)

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water are working in partnership with Gwent Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Down to Earth and local contractors to deliver this National Lottery Heritage Funded project, which will enable it to:

- Construct a Celtic Roundhouse to act as an educational base to deliver future Forestry School Activities and Sessions.
- Carry out path improvement and tree safety works in Cwmbwrwch and Pentre Waun Woodlands.
- New volunteer opportunities to deliver some woodland management sessions, flora identification and ecological surveying.
- Delivery of 2x Dawn Chorus guided walks in Spring 2024.

Welsh Government: Designated Landscapes & Countryside Access Branch (DLCA)

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Access Reform

We are funding NRW until the end of March 2024 to continue to:

- develop the strategic approach to promoting responsible recreation across Wales and
- influence visitors and users of the countryside to understand and follow the Countryside Code.

Unfortunately, due to budgetary constraints, we are not able to fund NRW to work on further access reform projects.

We met with Local Access Forums on 4 October to continue the process of reviewing the regulations and guidance associated with LAFs. Unfortunately, a lack of WG legal resources has meant that this work can not be progressed further until the Summer.

We met with Local Authorities on 8 February to begin prioritising those reforms that would provide the most efficiency and resource savings. We now need to consider whether any of these can be achieved through secondary legislation.

A working group has been established to look at the next steps of creating a single statutory digital map of all rights of way, public access land and designated National Trails. This follows on from the initial report produced by Rachel Dolan in 2022.

Funding provided by DLCA

The Access Improvement Grant will provide £5.6 million from 2022-25, to Local and National Park Authorities that have public rights of way responsibilities. The grant aims to improve access to the countryside, green space, blue space and open access land.

A £1.3m capital Allotment Support Grant is available to local authorities in 2023-25 to improve and increase allotment provision in their areas.

During 2022-25, £315k will be provided to Social Farms and Gardens to deliver the Community Land Advisory Service (CLAS). CLAS helps identify suitable land, negotiate leases and provide planning and specialist land advice. The funding helps communities identify and take ownership or control of green spaces for recreation and food growing.

END.