

Grŵp Siarter Amgylcheddol Awyr Agored
North Wales Environmental Outdoor Charter Group

Tuesday 6th November - CMC Pensarn Harbor

Attendees:

Catherine Miles - Snowdonia-Active
Ashley Charlwood - Canoe Wales
Lei Bramich - Freelance
Mark Bramich - Arthog
Beth Heyward - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Linda Addinall - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Becks Davie-Tettmar - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Matt Cox - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Mark Bristow - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Anna Yorke - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Josh Thomas - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Anne-Marie Raikes - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Hannah Cowlard - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Abi Barker - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Joe Wicks - CMC Pensarn Harbour
Tom Blackburn - CMC Pensarn Harbour

The meeting was opened by Catherine Miles (CM) who introduced herself and explained her current position with Snowdonia-Active (S-A). CM explained that at the last series of meetings in February and March, she was working for S-A on a freelance basis, two days a week on the Environmental Charter. Due to a lack of funding CM explained how she has now been employed by S-A for three days a week to work on other projects in addition to the Environmental Charter. The Environmental Charter is a development project for S-A therefore the more work CM can help S-A bring in, the more money can be released to the charter group. Currently this means that a maximum of one day a week of CMs time is spent on delivering the Environmental Charter.

CM informed those present that the group has just found out they had been successful with an application to the Anglesey AONB Sustainable Development Fund to produce a waterproof field guide to the North Wales Coast which will be completed by March 2014. The guide will include input from Anglesey AONB project officers, North Wales Wildlife Trust and Geomôn.

Those present then introduced who they were and either explained a bit about what their centre/business does in terms of environmental best practice or their interests in being at the meeting. The meeting had been made compulsory for all staff by the head of centre at CMC Pensarn Harbour.

CM then gave a presentation explaining a bit about the environmental charter for those new to the group.

A question was asked about whether the environmental charter was a national thing. It was explained that there are environmental charters in Pembrokeshire and South Wales/Brecon Beacons but the North Wales Environmental Charter has been written specifically for North Wales by the steering group taking into consideration the other charters.

CM then went through each of the aims of objectives of the group and explained the developments and actions the group has taken on each.

1. Providing environmental best practise guidelines to activity providers.

- Environmental Charter open to regular review,
- Waterproof field guide - 'iSee North Wales Coast' - AONB Anglesey
- Contribution to consultations - Safety at Inland waters, Sea Kayaking Code and Bushcraft Guidelines - consultations are displayed on the North Wales Outdoor Forum and are also distributed around key members of the sector who have expert knowledge in the field and the group will feed back information for consultation.

2. Enabling an effective and reliable communication system to and from the sector internally and externally.

- Snowdonia-Active customer relationship management (CRM) system was used to display the spread of charter group members across North Wales. CM explained that the CRM is being built by S-A, and is able to deliver timely and relevant information to those members of the sector the information needs to reach.
- A Facebook page has been set up for the group.
- A Twitter account has been set up for the group.
- Monthly updates are set out to over 300 people who have asked for requests.
- The North Wales Outdoor Forum is used to display a variety of information, in particular S-A keeps the site updated with the latest consultations which impact the outdoor sector, not limited to those which are link to the environment.

A couple of current issues which impact the outdoor sector were expanded upon.

Open Access - A review of Welsh Legislation

Ashley Charlwood was invited to report on the recent announcement from Welsh Government that they are to review existing legislation and guidance relating to access and outdoor recreation. If there was a change in legislation it could mean a 'scottish' style charter for Wales, where by it is your statutory right to access undeveloped land as long as you behave. More information can be found on the [Welsh Government Website](#). AC explained that this is "once in a lifetime" opportunity and very exciting for for the outdoor sector.

Natural Resources Wales: Planning our Future

CM with input from AC explained how Natural Resources Wales who came into being in April 2013, amalgamating Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency have released a document for consultation, titled Planning Our Future. Comments are invited on this consultation document until 10 January 2014. The document focuses on who NRW are and what they do, their purpose, their finances and how they will operate; contributing to their corporate plan for the next few years. The group plan on making a response to this consultation as it is essential that sustainable recreational use of the environment remains central to the work of NRW.

3. Offering relevant environmental training to raise awareness and encourage best practice.

The group has run two environmental training sessions over the summer of which were accredited by the Mountain Training Association. The sessions were run in collaboration with North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT) who offered their time in kind meaning that the sessions could be run for free for charter group members. CM explained how other steps have been taken to organise training, however, limited funds have thus far meant the group can only offer training if the trainer/organisation is able to offer their time in kind. It does not come as a surprise that this has been difficult to find. The group will continue to search for funding so more training sessions can be organised as relying on in kind contributions is not sustainable. A slide showing the type of resources NWWT brought to the sessions was displayed and those present were informed that useful resources such as this can be found on the [wildlife watch website](#).

4. Facilitating a platform for discussion, development and action.

CM explained that this is exactly what meetings such as this are for. These group meetings offer an opportunity for those involved in the sector to come together to discuss and share ideas on how we can sustainably grow the industry and ensure that popular venues are managed in a sustainable way. Meetings such as this give members an opportunity have their input into the group and to raise concerns they think the group might be able to assist with.

CM explained that as a result of the discussions had at the last series of meetings in February and March the steering group was able to group through the points raised and decided which they could action on.

After litter was reported at a number of previous meetings. The groups has organised two clean up events. One supported the Loving our Lake clean up of Llyn Padarn; Rubbish Paddle, Rubbish Walk, Rubbish Swim and the second event was a clean up of the Afon Ddu car park as part of Tidy Wales Week.

Due to the fact that in February and March four meetings were held in different areas, naturally different issues were brought up. CM explained how the group has tried to action on as much as possible from the outcomes of the previous meetings but recognised it was not relevant to go into detail on each development in each area, therefore a brief summary of the key successes/developments was delivered and then those specific to the area were expanded upon.

Key Successes/ developments

- Afon Ddu - CM explained how the charter group has good relationships with the NRW reserve manager of the SSSI which borders the Afon Ddu gorge. The reserve manager Mike McCabe (MM), reports information regarding the gorge to the group which is then distributed around members. CM has carried out a site visit with MM at the Afon Ddu to discuss improvements to egress points from the gorge.
- Craig Yr Undeb - Union Rock has been reported as a venue which could benefit from some remedial work due to ground erosion. Meeting with the BMC has revealed that the Access and Conservation Trust could be a potential source to finance the project which could also be undertaken partly as a voluntary conservation project by the group. The group has approached the landowner for permission and is awaiting a response. In the meantime the venue is being monitored.
- Clean Up events - Loving our lake and Keep Wales Tidy
- Mess bins - After a dog mess problem was reported to the group at Broadwater, Towyn, the group reported this problem to Gwynedd Council and there is now a mess bin in place. Those present reported that there has been a noticeable reduction in dog mess since the bin has been in place.
- Environmental Training - North Wales Wildlife Trust
- Charter Mark and promotion of the group
- Waterproof Field Guide - North Wales Coast - Anglesey AONB

Funding Update

Those present were informed on the current funding situation for the group. Unfortunately, applications to SPLASH, NRW, Gwynedd Council and the Lush Charity pot have all been unsuccessful.

5. Building consensus between activity providers, external agencies, conservationist and land managers.

- NWEOCG represented at 20+ meetings since the inception of the group, there is more awareness of the environmental charter across the sector.
- The group has offered support for various external projects such as The Big Dee Day; a clean up of invasive species on the river Dee, Tidy Wales Week and the Snowdon Tidy which aims to achieve a meaningful reduction to litter on Snowdon.
- CM explained the links the group has with the other charter groups through the Wales Activity Tourism Organisation (WATO). WATO is a national forum which links S-A, Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group (POC) and South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group (SWOAPG). The aims of WATO are to share good practice across Wales, ensure activity tourism in Wales is high quality, well managed and appropriately marketed and to ensure the sustainable development of the outdoor sector. Through WATO links the group is able to distribute copies of the Reconciling Conservation and Recreation, Sea Kayaking in Wales DVD produced by POC.

6. Promotion of the Environmental Charter

Since the last meeting a charter mark has been designed for the group which members are able to use to signal their environmental credentials.

CM delivered a presentation on the environmental charter at the North Wales Outdoor Forum which took place in March in Llanrwst. Around 200 people were present at the forum.

The environmental charter is now beginning to play a role in management plans and tourism strategies, evidence to it becoming more widely know of and accepted across the sector.

CM then reported membership numbers. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, over 300 individuals/organisations have requested updates from the group, however the number of those who have signed the charter is considerably lower.

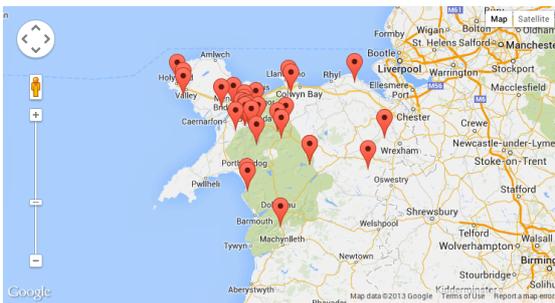
Individual = 11

Organisation = 18

Endorsing Partners = 2

Total Membership = 31

A following maps were shown of current members and potential members.



Future and Events

Llyn Padarn Christmas Clean Up - 1st December, 2pm Surf-Lines. After the first clean up event of Llyn Padarn, it was suggested a repeat of the event should take place in the winter when the vegetation has died back. Barefoot wine will be sponsoring this event so everyone who takes part will receive a free glass of wine.

The charter group are trying to organise a screening of 'Project Wild Thing', a recently released feature length documentary which aims to reconnect children and their parents to nature.

The charter group will complete the Waterproof field guide to The North Wales Coast by March 2014.

Improvements to the Afon Ddu gorge will hopefully begin in early 2014.

The group will continue to promote the Environmental Charter to increase membership to the group and will also continue to search for funding for future projects.

Small Group Discussion

AC then facilitated a discussion session, suggesting that due to the numbers in attendance it might be better to break into two smaller groups to discuss the following which was offered as a guide:

- Focus for 2014?
- Problems/ issues/ opportunities?
- Structure of meetings/ group - themes/area specific/activity specific?
- Desired environmental training - ideas for collaboration?
- Is NWEOCG missing out on anything which we could support?

Discussion Outcomes

Nantcol gorge used by CMC, lots of erosion, not only due to them, but also from public use. CMC don't know whether there is an impact from them using it, and would like to look at the site in a positive and proactive way.

The Arthro Estuary not aware of the species in there, not aware of any impact, but would like to have more education about what small things they could do to positively influence the area.

The member of staff that had knowledge to run field studies on the Beach has left, CMC are very keen to get this going again, but need some training.

From the domestic side Ecocentres and Ecoschools was mentioned as an organisation that might be better approached from the CG

Training, Arthog and CMC would like to work together and help share knowledge and training on all environments, but perhaps coastal birds would be a good place to start

There was general consensus that site specific, relevant training was best for the centres needs, but most also wanted to broaden their own personal development by attending other venues.

Barmouth Slabs came up again, same issues toilets/litter/erosion and rigging problems. The old slabs committee was talked about, and there was a feeling this might be useful. They would really like to see a code of conduct for the slabs produced to deal with the issues, but would like to do it in collaboration.

The overflow car park at Ty Nant (SNPA owned) is really treacherous when at all wet when visiting with a minibus-is there a chance of making this slightly better.

There was a general feeling of how to discuss the use of the environment with young people (like sphagnum moss and all its uses) as it really brings the environment alive.

Practically it is better to train a couple of senior centre staff and let them do in house training.

A real desire to see NGB qualifications having a greater emphasis on the environment, but all accepted this might take a long time to actually get in place. Could NWEOCG provide support to NGB's at revalidation days by having some key, environment specific training in a couple of hours.

Discussion again about CPD points if possible for any training sessions.

One of the group members had an idea of a Wales coastal path litter pick and wondered about sections of the path being adopted by individuals and organisations. Although they didn't want to lead on this, they thought maybe the charter group could.

It was suggested that there are many organisations in the area which were not present at the meeting and that those present should take responsibility for spreading the word

about the charter. Air cadets, Scouts, schools, youth groups, rotary clubs and golf clubs were just some of the groups mentioned which should be informed about the environmental charter. Lei Bramich offered to approach local organisations. CM will provide information on the group and the charter.

There was unanimous agreement that environmental training is a good idea. There were mixed feelings about online courses being a good idea. CMC expressed the more they could learn the better and that anything learnt by senior staff could be passed on to the trainees and become part of the centre training.

Brian McDonald from Wildlife Wales was suggested as potential partner for collaboration for training as he has extensive knowledge of the area. Brian will be contacted about invited to the next meeting.

Dog mess was reported as a problem on the sand dunes at Harlech and it was suggested that a mess bin could be placed where the life ring is.

A mess problem was also reported on Snowdon, particularly noticeable after the snow had thawed. There was all round consensus that the general public are not acutely aware of how damaging poo can be to soil and vegetation and this is an issue that needs raising. This will be raised with the Snowdonia Society who are leading on the Snowdon Tidy project.

Those present suggested an organised clean up along the Mawddach estuary would be a good idea.

It was suggested that food at meetings would be a good way to attract more people and that if funds are limited so this could be done on a bring and share basis.

Environmental Charter, Sign up, Membership Certificates

Copies of the environmental charter were given out and those present were given the opportunity to sign up to the charter. CMC Pensarn were presented with their membership certificate.

AOB and Close

There was no other business brought up. CMC Pensarn were thanked for their hospitality including tea and cake and the meeting was brought to a close. Those present were welcome to take a Seak Kayaking in Wales DVD.