



Grŵp Siarter Amgylcheddol Awyr Agored  
North Wales Environmental Outdoor Charter Group

Thursday 4th December 2014 - Ty'n y Berth

## Attendees

Catherine Miles (CM)- Snowdonia-Active

Anne Vowles (AV) - Freelance

Glen Bickell (GB) - Outward Bound, Aberdovey

Justin Lyons (JL) - Natural Resources Wales

CM opened the meeting with introductions asking each person to say a little about who they work for and their interests in being at the meeting.

## 1. Introduction to the Environmental Charter

For those who had not attended a charter meeting before CM gave an introduction to the work of the group and what the Environmental Charter means for the outdoor sector.

Current membership numbers:

Steering Group = 13

Individual = 66

Organisation = 42

Endorsing Partners = 5

Total = 126

## 2. Updates

CM discussed group developments since the last meeting. At the last series of meetings members in other areas were asked whether they want the group to go down a similar route to those in the Dee Valley with the AONB badge scheme. An example of a similar scheme was also discussed from Scotland (Wild Scotland Wilderness Guide). Most members expressed that they value having the option of attending trainings which are of interest to them rather than having to go to a prescribed number of sessions which may not fit round their working schedule or be of interest to them.

CM explained to the group that thanks to Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and Cadwyn Clwyd the group have received funding to produce an iSee North Wales Rivers guide which will be similar to the north Wales coast booklet created earlier in the year.

CM talked about funding for the group. She explained that an application to the Nature Fund for Afon Ddu had been unsuccessful so she was now in the process of writing a funding bid to the European Outdoor Conservation Alliance (EOCA). A joint working partnership application has also been submitted to Natural Resources Wales. A decision on this will be made by Christmas. If successful this would see a three year contribution to the group.

CM talked about training sessions since the last meeting which include:

Groups in gorges with Natural Resources Wales in the Ceunant Llennyrych/Afon Prysor

2 x Wild Cooking with Nature's Work

## 2 x Making the most of Afon Ddu with Gritten Ecology

An evening talk from the Natural Navigator, Tristan Gooley. CM explained that Snowdonia-Active were hoping to run two more sessions with the Natural Navigator in the new year.

### 3. Wild Camping

CM explained that over the summer and also at steering group meetings topics are brought up and suggested as discussion topics for charter meetings. CM said that she had tried to select topics which were relevant to the area. Wild camping is a topic that is relevant to most areas across north Wales. CM asked the following questions to the group:

- Issues/specific sites at risk
- Alternating camping sites
- Asking landowner permission/semi-permanent camps
- Site already in use
- Sanitation: carried out or buried?

When this issue had first been raised, Outward Bound, Aberdovey had been mentioned as a centre which is carrying out all sanitation from wild camps. We discussed this, with GB saying that it is essential they do this to ensure they are able to use to spots they do for wild camping.

CM then shared some information on wild camping best practice. Link to the points raised and articles mentioned can be found below:

[BMC - Wild Camping Worries](#)

[BMC - Going Solo: Call of the wild](#)

[BMC Green Guide to the uplands](#)

[Kathleen Meyer - How to shit in the woods](#) - Shhh-it! Kit

[Snowdonia National Park - Wild Camping Code](#)

[Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter - Bushcraft & Wild Camping Best Practice](#)

[The Scottish Mountaineering Council](#)

### Managing Human Waste



## Managing Food Waste

Prepare and repackage food before leaving – reusable containers and resealable bags can save on waste

Try and deposit cooking water a good distance (30m) away from any watercourse

Strain the food scraps out of the water (tea strainer) and carry it out with you (or bury it if need be)

Clean the cooking utensils away from running water and with a non-biological cleaner.

## 4. A National Charter

CM explained that there are two other charter groups across Wales and it had recently been brought to the attention of the groups that it might be beneficial to have a national charter which is the same for all groups across the country. It was therefore important to gather thoughts from the group on the possibility of a national charter.

AV said if it would support the charter groups tracking down funding then she could not see any problem with it but would like to see a draft national charter before anything was confirmed.

GB thought that many people who haven't signed the charter already, think they have. He suggested an email be sent to all on the emailing list to remind people if their name is not on the list on the charter website then they have not signed up.

<b>AP1: CM to email all on mailing list and check if they want to sign up.</b>
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## 5. Managing groups whilst minimising impact

All leaders adapt their plans and actions when out with a group. It may be due to the weather, the group's skill or an emergency. The same adaptive thought process can be used when considering the environment. With this in mind the following questions were asked to the group:

Is it currently working?

How are venues shared?

Is there any mechanism to find out who will be at certain venues?

With a smaller proportion of activity providers in the area there are not many issues with overcrowding at venues except for Barmouth Slabs. CM asked whether payment over use of Barmouth Slabs had been resolved as this was something that had been raised at the previous meeting. GB explained that all centres were paying for access again and did not have a problem with this.

Here are some best practice points from the presentation:

Where possible, try and remain on durable surfaces – rock, hard ground, sand etc

When it is necessary to cross sensitive habitats such as bogs and marshland, try to spread the group out to minimise impact

If travelling through heavily eroded areas, try to stick within the erosion mark rather than skirting around the edge

Travel over durable surfaces or already eroded land by bringing your group into a tight formation

Travel over fragile surfaces by spreading your group out into a wider formation too increase surface area

Lead by example

Don't over use venues, work with other Outdoor Centres to manage the problem over overuse of key sites

When climbing, try and base your group on a durable surface – think about the path that the group will make too and from the crag

Protect belays – avoid using tree belays if possible

When scrambling with a group, promote the rock as a hand hold rather than the turf

Keep an eye out for birds nests and solitary unusual looking plants

Communication is key

## 6. AOB - None

Other comments which came of out the meeting include:

Organisations in the area which the group could work with: Coed Dyfi Woodlands, Dyfi Biosphere and the Centre for Alternative Technology.

AP2: CM to invite organisations above to next meeting.
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Monday or Fridays would be best for trainings for Outward Bound.

## 7. Presentation from Justin Lyons, Ynyslas Reserve Manager. Critical Environments: Sand dunes and Climate change

After it was suggested at a steering group meeting a speaker on sand dunes was organised for this meeting.

JL opened the presentation saying that Ynys Las was a test range in World War Two and every year around three bombs are found in the estuary which need to be detonated.

JL then talked about the conditions which are needed for sand dunes to form. These are dry sand, wind (warm and strong), obstacles and vegetation. JL followed by talking about the difference types of sand dunes and there durability over the seasons.

After JL talked about one of the most common species found in the sand dunes; marram grass. It has a huge root system which enables it to find water and also a fungus association which doubles its capacity to find water. To enable the marram to hold onto water its outside has no pores but its inside has lots, the grass will open on an warm sunny day to breathe but the rest of the time stay closed so water is retained. Its glossy, rolled-up leaves protect it from drying out.

JL explained that sand dunes are less sensitive that people used to think and that conservationists have come round to thinking they need to be dynamic as stillness could lead to fossilised systems.