# National Access Forum Wales Access to Water Sub-Group meeting 15th October 2020

## Attendance

Chair: Dave MacCallum (NRW), Steve Rayner (WATO), Chris Mills (Afonydd Cyrmu), Bernard Griffiths (FUW) Charles de Winton (CLBA), Ian Doyle (Angling Trust), John O’Conner (Angling Cymru), Phil Stone (Canoe Wales) Rachel Evans (CLA), Vicky Martin (Dwr Cymru), Huw Evans (Welsh Dee Partnership)

### Welcome to new members:

* Ian Doyle - Angling Trust
* Huw Evans - Welsh Dee Partnership
* Rachel Evans – The Countryside Alliance
* Vicky Martin – Dwr Cymru, Welsh Water

### Brief overview

Dave gave a brief overview of the sub-group’s work and considerations to date.

The interpretation of equity was raised and expressed as: Interested parties need to be treated equally; financially and with regard to access, regulation and liability following a consistent approach.

### The letter to Deputy Minister and her response

The letter and response were circulated with members prior to the meeting.

It was agreed in the light of recent ministerial change to Lesley Griffiths MS, that Dave should seek to raise the profile of the sub-groups work, looking to write informing the MS of the recent communications with Hannah Blythyn.

Charles, Rachel and Bernard agreed that following discussions with their respective organisations, that they could not agree with any recommendation that would result in an imposition and that any erosion of property owner rights would be opposed. That said it was agreed that voluntary engagement was supported.

Dave stated that the work of the sub-group was not about developing a model for ministerial application and imposition; it was seeking a model of consideration and consent, that could be tested on the ground and through consultation.

DM’s wish for thoughts on “wild swimming” concluded the following points:

The sub-group rejected broadening consideration to include wild swimming at this time, as it has the potential divert the focus of the current work.

It was recognised that organised open water swimming, delivered with infrastructure and safety consideration, such as the current Dwr Cymru initiatives being piloted on reservoirs, was different to wild swimming, with this work being commended.

Concerns were noted relating to public behaviour in the countryside, though and post lockdown, leaving field / stock gates open, uncontrolled dogs and rubbish and filth left, which had led to a significant rise in complaints by landowners.

Dave confirmed that WG officials had not yet met with him to discuss the feasibility of the groups proposals as suggested in DM’s response.

### Realistic objectives for report to Minister, by March 2021

In consideration of the writing of the report, proofing with members and the wider consultation with NAFW prior to sending to Minister, the timeline for our work was up to the end of December.

This timeline and the constraints of covid shape what is deliverable in the report, although Dave made it clear that from a WG standpoint, March is a reporting timeline and not the end of the sub-groups work. It is very much envisaged to continue.

It was agreed that this report represents an opportunity to attract and develop WG enthusiasm and support, for the piloting of our concepts as the next stage.

There is a requirement for members to share the concepts that the group are considering, with their wider membership. As such. it was restated that we are looking to develop and test ideas and concepts which will hopefully deliver an equitable and sustainable solution to access to water. We are not looking to take dogmatic decisions and enforce or impose them.

A realistic objective is to specify the process and objectives for a pilot, identifying a list of rivers, of differing characteristics and challenges, focusing on the approach and process for a pilot. This would identify the differing challenges for example those of a Welsh boarder river in contrast to those of a mid- Wales one.

Dave is to circulate a list of previous and current VAA’s for members to consider and reply with factors of success and failure, anonymously to present informed understanding for pilot challenges as well as to answering DM’s question.

It was recognised that a meaningful pilot would take in excess of 6-months to conduct and would have cost implications that will need to be quantified and funded.

It was agreed that we should re-visit the Mawddach report and Dave will re-circulate this.

The key components of our report were agreed as comprising the 4 Ps

1. Principles
2. Process
3. Pilot Specification
4. Past learning

It was agreed to reconvene at 2pm on 5th November to bottom out a consultation process that we can all support.

Members are encouraged to share any relevant components from previous experience of access arrangements, positive and negative with Dave and the group. Dave will look to pull this together, ideally as a SWOT matrix.

It is recognised that members are giving their time freely, against a backdrop of very limited resource, time and funding which will need realistic consideration as this work continues in 2021.