

## **Access Update for BMC Area Meetings Wales September 2020**

**Elfyn Jones BMC Access and Conservation Officer in Wales**

### **Covid Updates**

As most people are aware, the regulations in Wales differ from those in force in England. At present people from any one house-hold in Wales can (from the 22<sup>nd</sup>) can meet indoors or outdoors with people from up to four other nominated households. Gatherings of up to 30 people are now allowed outdoors and sporting events or organised sports meets no longer need to be organised by a governing body, club or business. However social distancing (2m) is still a legal requirement for people from outside your household in Wales. Campsites and other forms of tourism accommodation can now open, but many have remained closed or have restrictions on numbers.

Many parts of Wales (and elsewhere) have seen a significant rise in numbers of people roadside camping or vaning. This has created a significant local problem of sanitation, litter and issues with large numbers of campervans and similar taking up spaces in lay-bys and parking areas at some locations. Many local authorities, national parks, and police forces in Wales are strictly enforcing a no overnight stay rule in many of these locations, using local bylaws in places.

There are currently no known closed areas under Covid Regulations in the Welsh countryside, but parking restrictions remain at many venues, especially honeypot areas such as Pen y Pass, Penyfan and some beach parking areas. Illegally parked cars or those causing obstructions in some areas (Ogwen and Pen y Pass in Snowdonia, Brecon Beacons and Gower) have been towed away by the police.

### **Lluest y Gwynt (Pumlumon) Wind Turbine proposal**

This large, 24 wind turbine proposal on the southern slopes of Pumlumon is currently at preapplication stage and lodged with the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspectorate and other statutory bodies had strong reservations and comments regarding the original pre-application process and submission by the developers, in particular there were several dozen comments and major issues raised by the Inspectorate, with inadequacy and failings in the process for carrying out the Environmental Scoping report that was put forward by the developers. The developers have now written to the Inspectorate, acknowledging these inadequacies and omissions and will at some point in the future come back with an amended and more substantial scoping report. This will then form the basis of an environmental assessment which will need to be agreed before the proposal can be submitted for planning consideration. The comments included insufficient detail on many aspects ranging from and including among other items, insufficient monitoring or information for assessing visual impact, insufficient information on wildlife conservation impact, impact on subsoil geology, impact on nationally important peat areas, lack of detail on impact on tourism and other socio-economic impacts, and many other issues.

### **Pandy Rock, Glyn Ceiriog**

A new owner has taken over the woodland and has informed the BMC that while forestry operations are underway, access for climbing will not be allowed. BMC is investigating if there is a covenant contained in the title of the land, from when the local authority sold the land, that could give access for climbing.

## **Castle Inn Quarry**

The main face remains fenced off and the main car park below the main face is still closed due to rockfall concerns. BMC have been told by Conwy Council that engineers will carry out any remedial work imminently.... In the meantime, please use the alternative car park for Mynydd Marian Nature Reserve, only 10 minutes' walk across the meadow at the top of the crag.

## **Range West Pembrokeshire**

Due to Covid restrictions, there are no more briefing for Range West in 2020 and only a lucky few (16!) managed to attend the pre-lockdown briefings. BMC enquired if attendance at previous briefings could be carried over for 2020 but this was not possible (the Range bylaws stipulate that all non-accompanied persons, including military staff, on the Range have to attend an annual safety briefing).

Angel Bay (Porth Dyniewaid), Little Orme

This is increasingly becoming one of the most important sites for seals, for breeding, pupping and for hauling out, on the North Wales coast. North Wales Wildlife Rusty and other conservation bodies are currently requesting that all users (including climbers/boulderers) stay away from the beach from beginning of Sept to the end of April. There is some speculation that another seal conservation body is seeking a permanent all year ban on all public access to this beach.

## **Craig y Dimbath, South Wales**

Natural Resources Wales have commented that recent new climbing activities at this venue in Bridgend county may be damaging to protected vegetation here. There are also some significant bat roosts at this venue. Local BMC access volunteer is looking into the issues and the RAD will be updated as required.

Tremadog Parking

Due to Covid, the café is only operating as a drive-through this year and both the car park and the toilets at the venue are closed for the general public (including climbers). Parking is therefore severely limited at Tremadog this autumn. Please do the utmost to avoid creating an obstruction and consider parking at nearby lay-bys towards Tremadog village or Prenteg village to the east and having a longer walk in.

## **Andy Boorman – North Wales Limestone**

Since lockdown the crags have become generally busier, as was expected with many opting to stay in UK.

There have been a few minor incidents at Castle Inn Quarry, mainly due to confusion re restrictions on the Main Face. Conwy CC assure us that work to stabilise it is in hand and will commence shortly.

Some issues on Pen Trwyn with climbers unaware of the School Holiday restrictions - not unusual! Local BMC volunteers have done a fine job keeping an eye on their patches, providing advice and guidance where needed and collecting litter.

Most problems have been caused by day tripper type visitors (not climbers!) from large urban areas, especially Regarding the BBQ and rubbish disposal fiasco and inappropriate behaviour.