



New National Park consultation

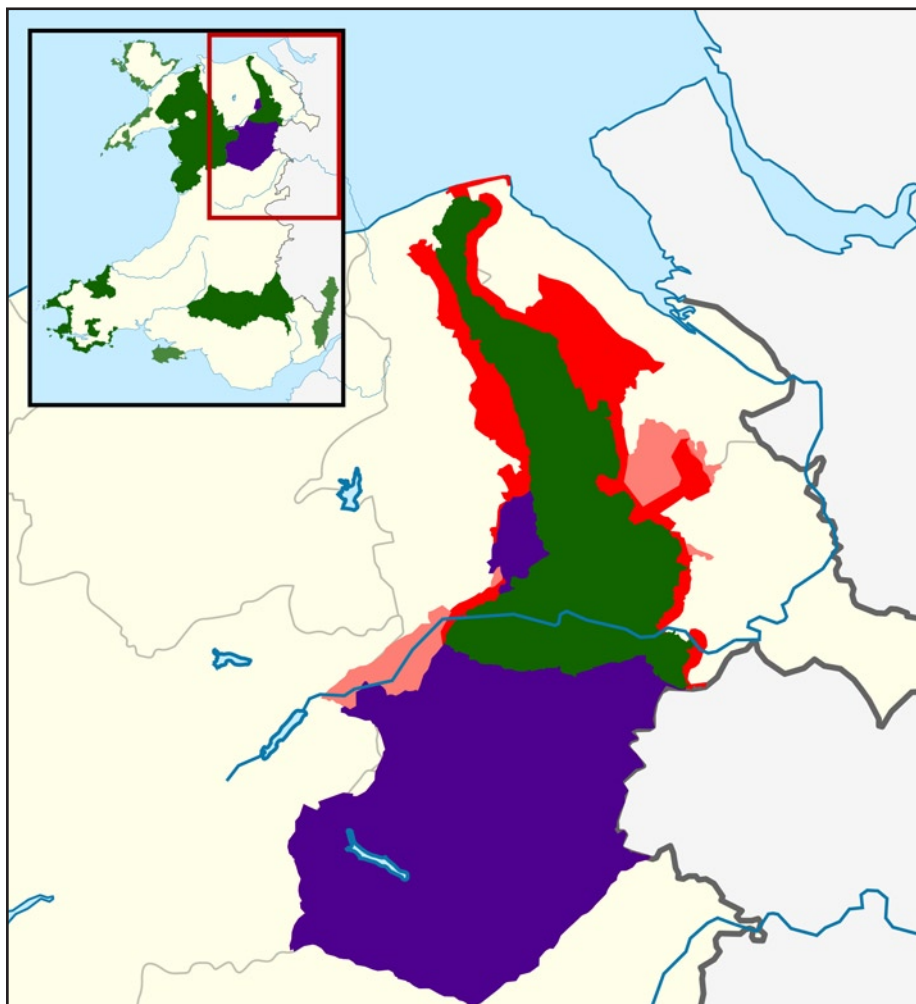
I AM writing this in the middle of the **consultation** asking for people's views for the new National Park in North East Wales. This started on 7th October and **will now be open until 16th December**. It involves a series of public engagement meetings and an online questionnaire, asking people what they like about the idea, and any concerns.

There are still major concerns about a number of issues. National parks cost £50 million a year to run and budgets in our existing three parks are already tight. A former chair of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park claimed that the authority had seen a 37 per cent real term cut in funding since 2010. The new National Park will have to be properly funded.

There is also the area it will cover as the draft map of what might be included shows the national park could adjoin Eryri, in effect creating one giant U-shaped designated area stretching across North Wales. However no boundary decisions have yet been made but a new "Area of Search" visual shows the park may reach down into north Powys to Llanfair Caereinion and across to Mallwyd in Gwynedd. It is possible that unlike the three existing national parks in Wales, the new national park will not have a planning function: that will be left to local authorities. There will definitely be a need for better public transport and more active travel with the footpaths fully open, signposted and waymarked.

However the higher profile given by national park status may enable the region to better promote its towns and attractions, so attracting additional footfall to support local hospitality and service sectors. This will give more employment opportunities in the area. It could also encourage people to other parts of the area as presently Moel Famau receives 300,000 annual visitors putting great pressure on the area.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has been asked to assess proposals for the national park. It aims to capture public feedback and draws up technical assess-



ments and prepares final recommendations. A decision on whether to proceed with the proposed North East Wales National Park will be taken in the existing Senedd term, which runs until 2026.

The last 'in person' event is on 10 December in Llangollen Town Hall. You can in any event look at the documents on the NRW website and complete the questionnaire. There is a link (next column), or just search for 'NRW national park consultation'.

*J Elwyn Williams,
Chair North Wales Area*

KEY TO MAP

GREEN - Existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

PURPLE - Additional candidate areas for inclusion in the new National Park

RED and PINK - Areas which have been considered for inclusion but which have now been discarded

The simplified map is from Wikipedia (author: DankJae), and this source is acknowledged with thanks.

For more information please refer to NRW maps and documentation:

<https://tinyurl.com/2s49b2kp>

Denbighshire Project



SINCE the last update the project has progressed well and now moves into its final few months at the time of writing.

I mentioned in the last update that we planned to replace a section of rotten boardwalk on the Pilgrims Way. A brilliant two days was had with a mixture of Ramblers and Pilgrims Way volunteers. A large section of old boardwalk through some very wet ground near Tremeirchion was removed and replaced. This was a brilliant example of joint working and sharing of skills and will be a lasting impact of the project.

The navigation sessions also continued to go down well. Six skills sessions were carried out with a total of 37 participants. At least one of these has progressed this further and has undertaken her Lowland Leader training and is now working towards her assessment. It's been really great to see so many people keen to develop these skills. I have also now delivered school maps and navigation sessions to over 200 children. These have been received enthusiastically by staff and pupils.

Led walks now total 25 and have been carried out with a variety of partners such as North Wales Wildlife Trust, Clocae-nog Red Squirrel Trust, Hendwr Caravan Park and Llangollen Railway. Over 150 people have attended one of these walks.

Vegetation clearance has been ongoing, often with small sections trimmed back as part of a walk. Denbigh walking group have helped in this way on some of their local paths. This has been done in conjunction with The Hwb and the Actif North Wales project.

As part of the project we are creating two short films showing some of the things we have achieved and some of the key people that have been involved. This filming took place in September and is currently being edited. The films will be shared widely when available. *[They may now be available - Ed.]*

I would like to thank anyone who has been involved, supported and shown interest in this project. We are in the process of looking at funding opportunities that could help us continue this community work further.

Heather Martin, Denbighshire Project Officer

Above: Sunset from Caer Drewyn near Corwen, taken when filming with Corwen Scouts. (NB. There is a leaflet on Caer Drewyn Hillfort, downloadable from the AONB website, which includes a suggested walk.)

Below: Volunteers at work replacing the boardwalk at the Flash, near Tremeirchion.

Photos by Heather Martin



Penrhos Coastal Park

Penrhos Coastal Park, near Holyhead, was discussed in Ron Williams' report on page 4 of the newsletter December 2023.

Locals mounted a campaign to retain a much loved area of outdoor recreation, against the threat of development of a substantial portion of the Park, under a planning consent granted by Anglesey Council.

'Save Penrhos Coastal Park' raised funds to mount a chal-

lenge to the planning consent, on the ground that it had not been implemented within the time specified and had therefore lapsed.

The case went to the High Court but the judge decided in October 2024 that the planning consent was valid. Campaigners now seek to raise funds to appeal that decision - see their Facebook page. PB

Area Secretary's Report

WE are fast approaching the end of 2024, why do the months of November and December always seem to move so quickly? We have so much to fit in and so little daylight to stimulate our minds!

We are moving on with our ICE Cards / Key Fobs – North Wales area is expecting to be able to supply these to the groups in the first quarter of 2024 – watch this space!

Area have also been able to support groups and leaders with some very good first aid training courses. Further dates have been issued for training please contact your group secretaries for details.

There has been much negative feedback regarding the publication of winter 2024 Walk magazine on-line, I personally have missed being able to hold the printed magazine and flick through the pages choosing which sections to read first or based on how much time I had available at that moment – I really hope that this is only a trial and the printed magazine is retained – it is a valuable resource that I would not like to see lost and adds value to our membership fees.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM in January, our speaker Rory Francis from Cymdeithas Eryri / Snowdonia Society came highly recommended.

Shirley Fermor Area Secretary

Leaders

The appeal by Ynys Môn Group for more leaders (next column) could probably be duplicated by most of the North Wales Groups.

The problem seems to start during the Covid period, which caused fewer walks to be planned well in advance, and more organised ad hoc. This coincided with efforts from Ramblers centrally to impose more bureaucracy on the way walks are run - resisted locally. But really, leading a walk is not a difficult thing and the risks are low. Try it!

We need more Walk Leaders - Can you help?

LIKE several other Groups in North Wales, Ynys Môn Group has far fewer volunteers to lead our walks than before the pandemic. We now have only three walk leaders and our priority is to recruit more to meet members' demands for more walks.

Here is how we plan to do so:

Encouraging more walk leaders

We believe there is great potential in our Group for volunteers to come forward to lead walks and we want to encourage you to do so.

Leading walks is not difficult and it is very rewarding when people tell you how much they enjoy your walks.

What we can offer you as a potential walk leader?

Ynys Môn Ramblers Group will offer support and assistance in these ways:

1. Our current leaders will offer you informal training on aspects such as how to plan and prepare for a walk, how to assess risks and avoid hazards, and how to communicate with people before and during a walk.
2. You will be able to assist an experienced leader in the preparation and undertaking of one or two of their walks to understand how it is done.
3. An experienced leader will accompany and support you on your first few walks whilst you gain confidence in leading.
4. We will point you to the Resources for Walk Leaders training course available free online to all Ramblers members. It is a step by step guide which is straightforward and easy to understand. It will help you prepare for your first walk as a leader.
5. If you think you would benefit from training in first aid or navigation skills we will support you to find a place on available courses. To give you confidence to lead your first walk, one of our walk leaders will offer a free navigation course for a small group of potential walk leaders.

Please consider volunteering to lead our Group walks.

As a first step contact our Walks Programme Officer, **Dave Melling** by text or phone on 07908 128768 or join one of our walks and speak to the leader about volunteering.

Membership report

Membership continues to grow slowly; the largest increase is in the North Wales Area section which indicates that new members are not being guided towards their local Groups.

A year ago the Area total was 1346, so there has been an increase of about 80.

A new Affiliate group has joined the Area, they are You'll Never Walk Alone (orYNWA) who are based in Prestatyn.

Contact me for any membership problems; a few occur each year when Head Office records are not kept up to date correctly.

Please contact me if you have any questions about your group's membership:

membership@ramblersnorthwales.org.uk

Dave Collins, Membership Secretary.

Group	Nov 2024	May 2024
LW01 Clwydian Group	158	155
LW02 Conwy Valley Group	228	227
LW03 Ynys Mon Group	146	146
LW04 Wrexham Group	123	122
LW06 Meirionnydd Group	115	116
LW07 Berwyn Group	66	66
LW08 Vale of Clwyd Group	149	146
LW09 Deeside Group	111	110
LW10 Eryri Group	245	234
LW96 North Wales Area Membership	88	72
Grand Total	1429	1394

Area Footpath Secretary's report

ALL the County Councils in North Wales are under severe financial constraints. So far the Rights of Way budgets and staffing do not appear to have been adversely affected

Ynys Môn Group continue to have good working relationship with the Council. This has resulted in a steady stream of Path modification orders including creations. The Silver Slashers continue their excellent volunteer work for the Council. During the year they received a grant from Welsh Water which was used to purchase tools and materials.

Wrexham Committee also continues to have good relationships with the Council. A long standing issue is a bridge on Wat's Dyke Way. The bridge has been closed by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) due it being unsafe. A diversion is in place but is on permissive paths around a former colliery waste site. A permanent solution could take some time. Elsewhere on Wat's Dyke Way Wrexham CBC are replacing the stiles with gates between Ruabon and Erddig.

In **Denbighshire** the Paths to Well Being project has been concentrated on two Communities, Llandrillo in the south and Tremeirchion in the north. Cooperation with the occupiers is proving problematic in Llandrillo. In Tremeirchion various works have been successfully completed. These include clearance and improvements to the net-

work and particularly a badly overgrown woodland. A boardwalk at The Flash has also been repaired.

The **Conwy** Committee has also had a busy year, The committee also carry out in cooperation with the Council maintenance and clearance work. The LAF which is joint with Denbighshire has been re-convened and has had its first meeting. Volunteers from both the Conwy and Denbighshire Committees are LAF members.

In **Gwynedd** again good relationships have been maintained with Gwynedd Officers. Although they have not carried out any maintenance work during the year Meirionnydd Group are hopeful it will be resumed in the near future. The bridge over Trawsfynydd Reservoir is in disrepair. This is not a public right of way and is the responsibility of the Power Station. This means repair is reliant on their cooperation. Plas Tan y Bwlch, owned by the National Park, has been put up for sale. The Group is concerned as to what will happen to the 30 kms of permissive paths in and around the property. The local community has also raised similar concerns. The National Park is going to discuss it at their meeting in November.

In **Arfon and Dwyfor** Tim Taclo Llwybau - the team of volunteers who have been carrying out footpath work for the last 12 years - has carried out 8 work days this year. The work is currently

suspended while a new agreement with Gwynedd Council is in place.

In **Flintshire** the Committee consists of 14 members who meet regularly throughout the year. They also meet with the Flints Right of Way team at least once a year. Several long term issues are nearing resolution. One, Ysceifiog 13, has been an issue since 1934 when the local vicar made a complaint. It is now open. The Committee Chairman monitors the development planning applications and has had some success in engaging with the developers before the application is finalised.

North Wales Coast Railway Line

Network Rail are planning to improve the line to enable the trains to increase speed and frequency, As a result they are planning to close four level crossings. Two of these at Pensarn will be replaced by a footbridge. Two others are at Prestatyn and it is not clear when these closures are planned to take place and whether a footbridge will be provided. There could also be additional level crossings on Network Rail's list, but we don't currently have that information.

Ron Williams

Local Access Forums

THE Welsh Government provides grants for Rights of Way Improvement Plans. From April 2025 these grants will only be paid in full if the County has a fully functioning Local Access Forum ('LAF'). This is the current situation as known to me in North Wales.

Gwynedd - Arfon and Dwyfor. This LAF has been fully functioning since it was set up in 2003.

Eryri National Park. This is Gwynedd (except for Arfon and Dwyfor) plus Conwy to the west of the River Conwy. Both these are administered by the National Park and have again been fully functioning since they were set up.

Conwy East and Denbighshire. Originally these two areas had separate LAFs. Both had recruitment issues. These were amalgamated but had not met since 2019. During the last couple of years attempts have been made to attract

members. The LAF has finally been re-convened and had its first meeting in October.

Flintshire LAF had merged with that for **Wrexham** but this had not been a success. Both decided to set up their own in 2023. Both are now functioning normally.

Access for All

With the Equalities Act 2010 the Highways Authorities (HAs) have a duty to ensure that their rights of way are, where possible, open and easy to use for all. In practice this means improving the paths so that obstacles such as stiles and steps are removed.

This has resulted in stiles being replaced by gates. This is dependent upon the cooperation of the occupier. The majority of these gates are kissing gates. This is of benefit to the majority

of users. Those with disabilities which require the use of wheelchairs or mobility scooters (as do parents with children in pushchairs) still have problems.

Over the last twenty or thirty years there has been an increase in facilities that are barrier free. This includes shared use routes, country parks and of course the Coast Path. Large sections of the Coast Path are fully accessible. In parts of North Wales however barriers have been erected to stop motorbikes using the route. They do allow bicycles, pushchairs and most mobility scooters to use the route. Larger mobility scooters are unable to get through them.

Campaigners are now threatening legal action against the HAs that use barriers.

Ron Williams
October 2024

Conwy Paths

THIS report summarises what the Ramblers Conwy Committee Report did during the 12 months to 30 September 2024.

1. Four committee meetings were held, all at Craig Y Don leisure centre, Llandudno.

2. We had three routine informal round table meetings with Conwy CBC at the Coed Pella Office, Colwyn Bay. These informal meetings with Conwy's RoW/Open Spaces team are very useful and can lead to resolution of Rights of Way (RoW) problems without recourse to legal action such as s.130 notices for obstructed paths.

3. We are pleased to report that Conwy East and Denbighshire Local Access Forum is re-convened and its first meeting was on 10.10.24 and its second meeting scheduled for Dec 2024.

4) Our committee also assesses planning applications that may impinge on RoWs and countryside matters. During the period 5.9.23 to 8.9.24 there were 826 planning applications of which 27 needed further scrutiny by our committee. No major objections were raised to any of them but sometimes applicants failed to show a RoW passing through or close to a proposed development. In those cases a letter was sent to the planning department informing them of this omission and reminding them that RoWs must at all times be kept open and unobstructed before, during and after any proposed works.

4) All RoW problems that are reported to us are fully investigated, and usually involve a site visit.

5) We always need further volunteers to check and maintain RoWs!

6) We work closely with CCBC and help with RoW maintenance such as vegetation clearance and stile installation.

7). There are still some practical problems with Conwy's RoWs:

a) Conwy CBC's IT system still has no simple way of providing the number of outstanding problems on RoWs.

b) The Find my Street Website for Conwy CBC area shows Conwy's RoWs but declares each one as "not maintainable at public expense". This is of course, incorrect and misleads the public**. We have asked CCBC to remedy this but there is still no change as yet. Pete Bland had notified ERF of the problem several years ago.

c) Our committee is not routinely

sent details of planning applications within Eryri NP that impinge on RoWs.

d) We received an email from Eryri NP stating that *"In the case of obstructions and any legal issues... [it]... is down to CCBC to deal with it as the legal highways authority. The arrangements between CCBC and the NP (Service Level Agreement) do not encompass anything other than basic maintenance for paths and furniture within the Conwy area of the National Park."* This has come as a surprise to us (and to the CCBC team!) This obviously begs the question as to when does basic maintenance become a legal issue?

John Buckley.

Secretary, Ramblers Conwy County Committee

** This is unfortunately a common problem with the 'Find my Street' website, but once you know about it you just have to ignore it. PB

Traffic Regulation problems

An order made by Conwy Council sought to prohibit motorised vehicles on a route near Siambar Wen, south of Llanrwst (SH811592 approx). It was certainly arguable that the route was unsuitable for motor vehicles, and there had been considerable erosion and damage.

However the order was challenged by motorised users who pointed to drainage problems and other issues. CCBC decided to abandon the order.

Local Access Forum (CEDLAF)

By law all Local Authorities are obliged to have a Local Access Forum (LAF) but in North Wales there has been a long hiatus as Conwy and Denbighshire's previous LAF finished five years ago in 2019.

After much badgering a new forum has been convened – CEDLAF – Conwy East and Denbighshire Local Access Forum and its first meeting was October this year. (Conwy west comes within the jurisdiction of the National Park LAF).

LAFs are expected to meet three times a year and are set up to advise bodies such as local councils, Highways Authorities, Natural Resources Wales and so forth on open access and outdoor recreation. Indeed basically the LAF can set its own agenda and thus can include such projects as Active Travel and local services.

As well as countryside users, LAFs should include land owners such as farmers. Moreover, the term countryside users encompasses those with an interest in pursuits such as green lane motorbiking, 4x 4 expeditions, and river and lake users, as well as walkers, runners, climbers, etc.

The LAF is expected to consider strategic options rather than getting involved in the minutiae of individual cases and of course, although it is anticipated that the LAF will offer opinion and advice there is absolutely no obligation whatsoever for any body to follow it, and indeed there is no obligation for the advice to be even considered! However it's nice to believe that suggestions coming from a statutorily legislated and funded body such as CEDLAF carries at least some weight.

I am glad to report that walkers are well represented on CEDLAF with three of the appointed members being active members of The Ramblers. So if there is anything you feel need raising don't hesitate to get in touch with

John Buckley

johnandritabuckley@gmail.com or

Kevin Slattery

kevinslattery1@yahoo.co.uk or

Geraint Roberts

gwrlr.roberts@talktalk.net

JB

Bro Garmon

We have had reports of problems with Rights of Way in the **Capel Garmon area**. The reports are that not only have path users been verbally abused and intimidated whilst using a Right of Way, but in one incident a walker was also physically attacked. These are of course serious crimes and the police became involved.

We are now in the process of assessing all the Footpath and Bridleway problems in the Capel Garmon area. If anyone can help us build up a picture of Right of Way problems in this area - whether it's poor waymarking, obstructions or indeed intimidation- please send an email to John Buckley at **jbetrades@gmail.com**

Meirionnydd paths

WE continue to have an excellent relationship with our two ROW officers in Gwynedd Council and we meet with them three or four times a year. They respond to any problems we draw to their attention promptly and as effectively as they can within the limits of their resources (both staff time and money). We have not undertaken any path maintenance work this year but have a project pencilled in for 2025. Current issues of concern on which we have offered advice and written support are a) the ongoing closure of the footbridge across Trawsfynydd Lake, b) the proposed sale of Plas Tan y Bwlch by SNPA and c) the potential closure of Coed y Brenin visitor centre by NRW.

Trawsfynydd Bridge is owned by the power station. The last maintenance inspection revealed some major problems below the water level resulting in the immediate closure of the pedestrian access across the bridge which was a useful route from the village to the western side of the lake. Local people are pressing for it to be opened and we

understand that the original agreement has recently been located and is being examined to see if there are any obligations about the provision of the bridge in perpetuity.

Plas Tan y Bwlch has recently been put up for sale by SNPA and the sales particulars include the land surrounding the Plas within the ownership of the Park. If the sale went through in its current form there would be a significant loss of permissive paths which form part of a 30 km network linking paths to those in the ownership of 5 other bodies in the surrounding area and which were established 40 years ago by agreement. Because of the public outcry, SNPA are to discuss the issue at their November meeting and it is hoped that Authority members will have regard to the concerns expressed at a recent 'drop-in' session held by the Park to explain the proposals, which we attended. One of the options that the Authority might consider is to dedicate their land as access land (subject to approval by the Welsh Government).

Re. Coed y Brenin- individual

members of the group did sign a petition to retain the visitor centre and the group also sent a letter to the local Senedd member raising our concerns that this was an important resource to the area. Visitor centres at Nant yr Arian and Ynyslas are also under threat of closure due to cuts that NRW are wanting to make. As a result of the petition, which attracted 13,000 signatures, the Senedd debated the issue and this can be viewed online. NRW's official position is that the centres will remain open whilst they seek interest from community and other interest groups to take over the running of the centres but the concern is that whilst this is going on, staff will leave and the centres will go into a spiral of decline. Although ROW are not directly affected at Plas Tan y Bwlch or Coed y Brenin we feel it is important to preserve access to these valuable spaces in whatever form they are.

*Gill Caves
Meirionnydd FP Secretary*

Useful websites for finding Rights of Way on maps

<https://www.bing.com/maps> is useful with personal/laptop computers that one can zoom into OS mapping at 1:25000 scale (i.e. Ordnance Survey explorer that we all use for walking). However Bing has some clever system that stops me accessing OS mapping if using a smartphone- presumably they've done deal with OS to make you subscribe to OS.

<https://www.streetmap.co.uk> provides 25k Explorer and 50k Landranger OS mapping (and other scales). It allows you to easily extract a grid ref from a point which you highlight (arrow) by clicking on the location of interest. Handy for converting between Lat / Long and OS Grid ref.

<https://shop.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/> the major cartographer for us all, but one needs to pay a monthly subscription to utilise their OS Map app mapping system whilst out walking.

<https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Resident/Leisure-sport-and-health/Coast-and-Countryside/Public-Rights-of-Way.aspx> can be used in the Conwy area to both report problems on RoWs and find RoWs but it is by no means an easy website to use. <https://dash4it.co.uk/> can supply all OS paper maps and usually at a discount.

<https://www.rowmaps.com/> a useful easy-to-use site to quickly access RoWs. Helpful in that this site can use the familiar OS maps as background and all the RoWs are both shown and numbered.

<https://www.findmystreet.co.uk/> This website says "The purpose of FindMyStreet is to support local highway authorities...in providing a list of publicly maintainable streets..." Unfortunately In the case of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flints, although it shows all the Public Footpaths and Bridleways, each one is stated to be not maintainable at public expense. This of course is absolute nonsense – in nearly all cases the local authority is responsible for RoW upkeep. Certainly Conwy have been told of this misleading statement but the website has not been updated. However Ynys Môn is the worst offender as it does not show any Public Footpaths at all! Full points for Gwynedd who not only show all the FPs but also correctly states each one is maintainable at public expense.

John Buckley

NOTE. The Find my Street website is very useful, particularly to volunteers wanting to see the extent of the network of maintainable ('adopted') highways, and how that interacts with public rights of way. It is not however optimised for people mainly interested in PROW, and some authorities don't include their path network in the data they upload. PB

Area Accounts & Treasurer's Report 2024

Ramblers Association - North Wales Area

Year ending 30th September 2024

Receipts and Payments at

<u>Receipts</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>Payments</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>
Central Office	3,500.00	7,000.00	Groups Grants	3,592.00	2,936.00
			Walks Programme	4,139.13	3,953.45
			Newsletters/Publicity	355.00	509.15
Publication Sales	120.00	64.80	Book Sale Expenses	-	-
Advertising Sales	80.00	30.00	Footpaths	94.26	347.55
			Countryside Protection	-	-
			Access	-	-
			Meetings (inc AGM)	575.44	601.90
			Admin(inc F/Aid trg £1230)	1,404.19	
			Flexi Groups		
			Wats Dyke Way		
Total Receipts	3,700.00	7,094.80	Total Payments(exWDW)	10,160.02	8,348.05
Surplus(+)/deficit(-)	- 6,460.02	- 1,253.25			

Bank reconciliation

	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>			
B/Fwd 1 Oct 20114798	10184.59	11437.84			
Surplus(+)/deficit(-)	- 6,460.02	- 1,253.25			
Watt's Dyke Way	761.90	761.90			
Bank balance at 30th Sept	3724.5	10184.59			

Signed:	Honorary Treasurer: Jeff Nagle
Signed:	Independent Examiner: Martin Hughes
Date:	Address:

INCOME *

Our income for the year was £3,700 made up from Central office grants of £3,500, sales of Ron's book £120 and £80 in donations for talks given by Ron Williams (shown as advertising sales).

* Figures rounded up

EXPENDITURE *

Our total expenditure for the year was £10,160. Two walks' programmes were produced and two area newsletters which cost £4139 and £355 respectively. £3,592 was paid in group grants and £1,404 meetings and admin. This admin figure includes £1230 for first aid training.

SUMMARY

Financially the area remains in a healthy position. We ended the year with a balance of £3724.57, which includes the £761.90 in the Wat's Dyke Way account.

Finally, I have decided to step down from the Area treasurers' role after nearly 10 years in post. So, there is an opportunity for some one out there, maybe one of our group treasures would be interested. (I did group and area treasurer for several years). If you are interested and would like to find out more of what is involved get in touch with me, email jeff.nagle@btinternet.com, and we can arrange a time to discuss the role.

Jeff Nagle, Area Treasurer

Rohan discount

We have been asked by Michelle Baylis to point out to Ramblers members that you can get 15% discount on purchases at the Rohan shop in Betws y Coed, on production of your membership card.

The Rohan shop in Betws is run by Michelle and her husband Steve.
Tel. 01690 710816
Social media:
[@Rohanshopbetws](https://www.facebook.com/Rohanshopbetws)

Members will already be aware that Cotswold Outdoors offers 15% discount to Ramblers' members.

A walk with a difference!

THIS was an **Ynys Môn Ramblers Group** walk with a difference, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We worked with **Partneriaeth Tirwedd Ynys Cybi / Holy Island Landscape Partnership** to organise a short walk to introduce participants to **the history and archaeology of Holyhead Mountain**, guided by the archaeologist, antiquarian and author Rhys Mwyn. Also on the walk was Ian Taylor of wellhopper.wales who explained the importance of the wells on Ynys Cybi and Wil Stewart (Park Ranger).

The historical part of the walk was from Breakwater Country Park to the RSPB cafe at South Stack, a distance of about 3 miles. Hot drinks were taken at the cafe, courtesy of the organisers.

The talks by the expert guides covered many topics, a few examples follow:

- The quarrying communities had a much more sustainable existence than today, with local water supply & their own food production such as pigs, chickens and crops.
- The well, Ffynnon y Wrach, an unusual structure which has been restored, is an example of a local water supply which was later extended to supply Holyhead. The water is said to be pure due to the filtering effect of the catchment rocks.
- The huts (Ty Mawr hut circles) were constructed of local materials, located on a south facing “flattish” slope with the entrance located away from the prevailing

wind. One hut had a unique feature with a “pestle”, for food production, as part of the floor of the hut. Portable pestles have been associated with huts but not as a “fitted kitchen”.

- The hill fort on Holyhead Mountain (Mynydd Twr) unlike most hill forts does not have evidence of huts – whereas the hut circles visited were in a more favourable location.

The information given on the walk was bilingual, in Welsh and English, and suitable for those who wished to practice their Welsh language skills.

Our car parking charge were paid for us and a free bus was provided to take those who wished back to the start from the cafe.

Most of us opted to continue the walk around the mountain with the Ramblers

leader whilst a couple of enthusiasts climbed to the summit of Holyhead Mountain to enjoy the spectacular views.

At the end of the walk, there was an opportunity to visit the new Visitor Centre, at the Breakwater Country Park with an introduction by Wil Stewart (Park Ranger).

Ynys Môn Ramblers Group would like to thank Rhys Mwyn, Ian Taylor and Wil Stewart for sharing their knowledge and expertise to show our members these fascinating parts of the local landscape. Our thanks also go to Paul Edwards of the Holy Island Landscape Partnership for initiating and organising a successful walk and for inviting us to participate. We look forward to partnering with local agencies on future walks on Anglesey.

Dave Melling



Below: the Group above Holyhead Breakwater (photo: Wil Stewart)

Above: Hut circles (photo: Paul Edwards)



Stepping Stones

CAERHUN Paths is a very loose-knit group of about 20 volunteers whose aim is the restoration and maintenance of our local public rights of way in Dyffryn Conwy.

The Definitive Map shows a 250m length of footpath (Caerhun FP61) through Coed Ffynnon Bedr at Tal y bont forming a potentially very useful link - but it was fenced off at both ends. Enquiries with locals revealed that the path had been illegally obstructed for at least 45 years.

We reinstated FP61 through the wood in 2022 by installing two ladder stiles supplied by Eryri National Park. As expected it proved popular, although access was hindered by having to cross the Afon Dulyn.

Research in the Conwy Archives uncovered a Ramblers' Association letter of 1948, including direct reference to stepping stones over the Afon Dulyn - of which no trace remains. They appear on no map; enquiries have not found anyone who can remember them. The only known evidence that they ever existed is the Ramblers' unambiguous reference.

We decided to reinstate them. The wood is now part of Ceunant Dulyn SSSI, so permission was required from Natural Resources Wales, and from Conwy County Borough Council as flood authority.

In order to protect the sensitive environment we proposed that no material would be brought onto the site; no concrete, no construction materials of any sort. Only natural river boulders would be used, sourced from the immediate vicinity, and no powered machinery used to move them - just human muscle. The river is a trout stream, so works had to take place outside the winter spawning season.

The Eryri National Park Wardens agreed to lead the work,



which took place in September 2024. A total of about 50 person-hours was needed, taking place over four days with only three people (including volunteers) on site each time. A budget of zero was set, with the project being successfully concluded on time and within budget - highly unusual for modern civil engineering!

The first photo shows the largest stone being moved. We estimate it at 2 tonnes; it took three of us two days to extract it from the river bed, turn it round through 180 degrees, move it half a metre upstream and then bed it firmly in place. Our only tools were crowbars and the 'Tirfor' hand winch visible in the photo. Because this is anchored around a convenient tree it can only pull in one direction and so has to be physically moved each time a change is required - which is a lot, and it is heavy. But it is quite amazing what it can achieve. In total five stones were moved, the furthest being dragged about 15m upstream.

The second photo shows the finished stepping stones; despite recent floods none of the stones have shifted a millimetre.

We realise that an inevitable consequence of our low-tech design is that we will have to keep an eye on them indefinitely, and undertake maintenance work. But they are in constant use, and attracting much favourable comment.

Richard Brunstrom

The Ramblers' letter of July 1948 mentioned above, and the accompanying sketch map, were reproduced on p5 of our previous edition, June 2024. The stepping stones are at SH764687 Ed. Photos: members of Caerhun Paths / Eryri NP



Some Reflections



Now, how do I get down from here?
Denis on top of the Great Orme (Photo: Monica McAteer)

ON 17th October (according to my Fitbit) I walked 10.25 miles from our house in Deganwy, along the Coast Path to West Shore in Llandudno, up the Great Orme, followed the path around the summit (see photo), and then descended by a different path and returned home again along the Coast Path. By the end I was tired but extremely pleased with myself.

Why was I so pleased? Well, early in May I had been discharged from a hospital in Lisbon, Portugal, where I was a patient for three weeks, recovering from multiple fractures of the pelvis having slipped on some very shiny limestone. The journey home from Portugal had been horrendous, on a stretcher perched above the headrests of about four rows of seats in an aircraft. Once home I was very diligent doing the exercises recommended by the hospital and by the end of June I was managing some short walks, initially with crutches. After about six weeks at home, I was visited by a physiotherapist who checked me over and was pleased with progress. A subsequent visit by the physio and a visit to the fracture clinic at Ysbyty Gwynedd showed that the fractures had healed sufficiently for me to return to a more normal lifestyle and slowly build up my strength for longer walks. You will now understand my pleasure

at having “conquered” the Great Orme!

We are all familiar with the benefits of walking as advocated by the Government, NHS, British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research, Arthritis.org, and others (*see links below*) and yet we are equally aware of friends and fellow Ramblers who have suffered from one or more of the ailments that are referenced by these web sites. Why, therefore, do we bother with our walks and membership of the Ramblers? I think in my case one of the benefits, suggested by my physio, was that my level of fitness as the result of regular walks may well have helped me achieve a faster and fuller recovery than would have been the case had I not been a regular walker. The Ramblers web site suggests that walking will help to keep you physically healthy, boost your mental health, relieve stress and improve sleep quality, boost your creativity, gives your day a structure, can be a form of socialising, and also a way to spend time with yourself. I also support our charity for other reasons such as caring for the footpaths which I can use to aid my recovery, allowing me access to our beautiful North Wales countryside and helping to maintain the beauty of that scenery.

I take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2025 with many great and interesting walks – but certainly with no falls!!!!

Denis McAteer
President, North Wales Area



The Silver Slashers (Ynys Môn) have now got the use of a new toy – photo above – purchased by Anglesey Council.

The new ‘toy’ is a tracked wheelbarrow used to transport tools and materials to the work site.

Use of the new vehicle is making an enormous saving in both time and effort.

Photo by Andria Massey

Links to Denis’ Reflections

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/focus-on-brisk-walking-not-just-10000-steps-say-health-experts>

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health/>

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/heart-matters-magazine/activity/6-surprising-health-benefits-of-walking>

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/get-involved/find-an-event/charity-walks/walk-all-over-cancer/top-10-benefits-to-walking>

www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/physical-activity/walking/12-benefits-of-walking

Max Grant

AFTER a long illness Max sadly died on 13 November.

Max was a civil engineer and he joined the Ramblers in the late 70's whilst living in Surrey. His move to North Yorkshire in 1992 saw the start of his volunteering for the Ramblers' Association, especially campaigning to ensure that paths were kept open and maintained for everyone to enjoy.

As the Area Footpath Secretary for West Riding Ramblers one of Max's many successes was persuading North Yorkshire County Council to spend more on improving their public rights of way. His work led to the creation, and three years of volunteering, on the Ramblers' North Yorkshire footpaths campaign - the county having the most heavily obstructed public rights of way network in England. In 1998, the Ramblers held the national 'Free Your Paths' rally in North Yorkshire calling for action by all highway authorities in England and Wales to get their path networks in good order by the year 2000. It was the largest Ramblers' rally since the 1940s. Max was instrumental in organizing this event, which saw over 2,000 people from across the two nations attend and walk together. The rally was hugely successful and helped to make the case for improved protection of rights of way throughout both nations.

Thanks in no small part to Max, the North Yorkshire Paths campaign resulted in an additional £900,000 being allocated to rights of way maintenance and staffing in North Yorkshire. The area's paths were transformed from the most obstructed and difficult-to-walk paths in England, to one of the best networks. He was appointed to North Yorkshire County Council Local Access Forum where he helped to influence the greater improvement of access for all. Whilst wanting access improved generally, he campaigned against inappropriate and damaging use by off-road vehicles in order to save the unique Yorkshire Dales Green Lanes. As a founder member of Yorkshire Dales Green Alliance he was instrumental in negotiating with the National Park and Nidderdale AONB officers to impose Traffic Regulation orders and on the most damaged routes.

He was an enthusiastic active supporter of the Right to Roam. After helping many delighted volunteers to cel-



Max Grant in the Lake District, 2003

(Photo: Max's family / friends)

brate when the Access to Open Country legislation was finally passed (CRoW Act), Max then contributed to ensuring that as much qualifying open country was mapped as possible, in Yorkshire and Wales – using, of course, his detailed spreadsheets!

On his retirement to Snowdonia, in 2004, Max very quickly offered his considerable wealth of knowledge and experience to North Wales Ramblers. From 2014 to 2018 Max acted as the Secretary for the North Wales Area of Ramblers Cymru in addition to his work as the Area's Access Secretary. Max was a member of the Welsh Council Executive Committee (WCEC) until his illness in 2018 and acted as their Secretary. At a national GB level, during these years Max was one of our two representatives from Wales who sat for two years on the Devolution Working Group (with representatives from Scotland and England) which concluded in 2012 with the signing of a Memorandum giving devolution to Wales and the 'birth' of Ramblers Cymru. His spreadsheets on the financial implications of devolution were a joy to behold!

Max took on the decadal review of the CRoW Act in Wales in 2012, which of course involved the review of all the maps of open access land in Wales – a huge task. He also played a central role over the years in CRoW access land casework in Wales, monitoring and commenting on proposals for restrictions.

Following this experience Max established and acted as Chair of the Ramblers Cymru Rights of Way and Access Group (RoWAG) which consisted of a community of members from all over Wales who were keen to campaign for, and protect, these critically important matters for all walkers in Wales.

Meanwhile (!) while all of this work was going on Max felt he should be doing more to protect the beauty of his local area of Snowdonia and he became a driving force of both the Ramblers' Conway County Committee and (as a continuation of his earlier Green Alliance experience) a North Wales grouping of individuals who fought against the destruction of the beauty of the countryside caused by off-road vehicles.

As a ramble Max managed to 'bag' all the Munros and also found time to be an active volunteer for another charity close to his heart, the Snowdonia Society, where he led on a whole variety of work at the Society's flagship property - Ty Hyll (The Ugly House). And, of course, he led the Queen Bee rearing team and looked after the small apiary with a team of local beekeepers (all ladies!).

He will not only be missed by his family and friends but also by a wide range individuals and charities who benefitted from his knowledge and skills over many years.

Denis McAteer

Eryri Walk Leader of the Year

WE are delighted to appoint Diane Jamal as Eryri Walk Leader of the Year 2024

Diane's strength and determination despite the weather or how she is feeling is amazing – her followers are never disappointed. Di has recovered from a serious life-threatening illness to play a full part in running Eryri Ramblers and leading excellent walks sometimes in really tough conditions:

We discussed this walk the day before - Di Said "I'm still streaming but it's only a head cold so feeling ok. I've dosed up on paracetamol and yes, I'm very grateful it's not raining!"

"Eight of us today determined to complete this challenging coastal walk in fairly unpleasant conditions but the good company and a little sunshine at the end made for a good day out".

Fort Belan - "I rec'd the walk today and was battered by fierce cross winds over the exposed coastline and marshlands surrounding the fort, and as heavy rain and winds are forecast tomorrow, I'm postponing the walk".

Footpath maintenance - "Don't get bored - get busy! just been round tidying up our local footpath - putting the way sign back up and trimming back some gorse - beautiful day today for the garden if not a walk

Porth Towyn to Morfa Nefyn - "The walk today from Porth Towyn to Morfa Nefyn started in sleet and ended in wind and rain but the bit in between was perfectly acceptable! The weather forecast was spot on. Eleven of us braved the biting cold but were rewarded by seeing a beautiful colony of seals along the way".

Nant Gwrtheryn to Pistyll - "Nine lovely walkers braced themselves for a wind blasted 10km circular coastal walk today from Nant Gwrtheryn to Pistyll, seeking refuge in St Beuno's church

for lunch. Thank you for your company and for looking after each other in quite challenging conditions. I'll look forward to repeating the walk in finer weather!"

Well-deserved congratulations from us all Diane!



Diane holding the cup

Photo: Jo-Anne Milnes

North Wales Ramblers AGM

Our AGM will be on **Saturday 11th Jan 2025, 2pm**, again at **Llanrhos Old School, Conwy Road, Llanrhos, LL30 1RW**, (near Llandudno). The old school is almost opposite St Hilary's church. Sketch map opposite.

Kevin Slattery (07503 139257) will lead a 3½ miles **pre-AGM walk** starting from Llanrhos Old School – 'some hills, great views'. Start at **11:00am**, back for 1pm. There will be a stop for tea / coffee / snack and you can have your packed lunch back at the AGM venue

The agenda and list of officers will be on the Area website shortly. If possible please let the chair know if you will be standing or re-standing for a post. Nominations will also be taken on the day.

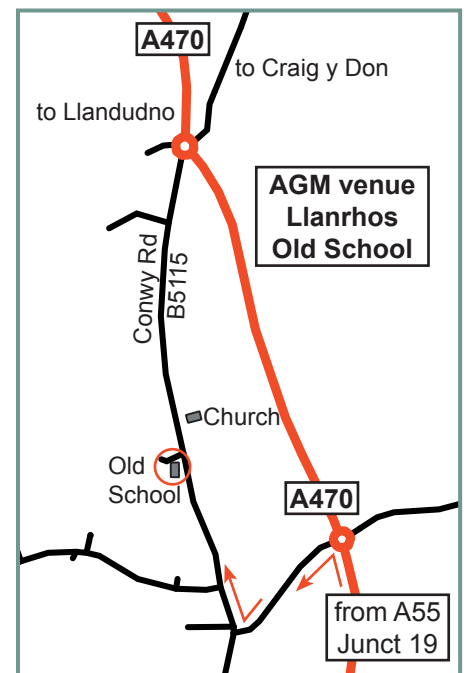
chair@ramblersnorthwales.org.uk

The AGM is your opportunity to have your say and includes the election of officers; questions about the annual reports in this newsletter; motions submitted in advance to the secretary. secretary@ramblersnorthwales.org.uk

There will then be refreshments and a guest speaker—**Rory Francis** from **Cymdeithas Eryri / Snowdonia Society**, whose subject will be "*Eryri am byth i bawb*", "*Snowdonia for ever for everyone*".

Directions from the A55 Junction 19. Head north towards Llandudno on the main A470. At the **third roundabout** from J19, take the first exit (Crogfryn Lane). After 300m you reach Conwy Rd – turn right and follow Conwy Rd for another 350m. The Old School is on the left. **Grid ref is SH 7928 8021**

Parking in the Community Centre is very limited so *please park on Conwy Road as well* - but not the side road (Cae Rhos) which is for residents.



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