



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON FRIDAY, 28TH MARCH 2008 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mike Johnson – Vice Chairman

Barry Clarke, Keith Donovan, Robert Jones, William Lindsay, David Parry & Malcolm Tucker.

Together with:

Norman Liversuch (Secretary), Phil Griffiths (Asst. Secretary), Andy Powell (Countryside Access Officer), Phil Jayne (Manager, Countryside & Landscape Services), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Angela Giddings, Lorraine Howells, Alison Palmer, Sue Steer, Juliet Michael (CCW) and Councillor Keith Griffiths.

1. PRESENTATION

The Forum received a presentation from Gavin Jones, Rural Key Funds Manager, on the projects that he had secured funding for via the Objective 1 Rural Key Fund Grant Scheme.

The Rural Key Fund aims to support small and medium sized rural businesses with business development projects that can provide a benefit to the local community. The grants are subject to terms and conditions and have been part funded through the European Objective 1 Programme.

The Forum received an outline of the following individual projects and partnerships that had benefited from the scheme:-

- Prince of Wales, Princetown.
- Wern Ganol Guest House, Nelson.
- Ynysddu Hotel, Ynysddu.
- Hollybush, Draethen.
- Awen vegetarian guest house, Abercarn.
- Rock Tavern, Argoed.
- Woodland Manager, Ruperra.
- Exclusive carriageway, Maesycwmmmer.
- High plains drifters
- Working landscape.
- Walking together.

The Vice Chair thanked Mr Jones for his informative presentation and invited comments from members. Discussion took place on the following issues:-

- The need for suitable accommodation to encourage walkers to the area.
- Mechanisms for obtaining/monitoring feedback from visitors to the area.
- Promotion of walking routes.
- Monitoring of usage of ROWs.
- The average level of grants awarded.
- The Walking Event on 10th May 2008.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2008 were approved as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Minute No. 10 - Total Liability

Mr Liversuch advised that it had not been possible to obtain any further information in relation to this issue. However, he would continue to pursue the matter and report on any progress to a future meeting.

Minute No 7 – Rights of Way Section

Clarification was sought on the new working arrangements for the Rights of Way Section. Phil Jayne, Manager Countryside & Landscape Services, confirmed that the responsibility for public rights of way now falls within the remit of the Planning Division.

3. OBJECTIVE 1 FUNDED PROJECTS

Phil Griffiths gave an update on progress with the following projects:-

- **Caerphilly Common.**
Since the disappointing cancellation of the bridleway project following the withdrawal of permission by the landowner, the Ranger had proposed a series of other access improvements which were now being progressed.
- **Other Commons.**
The Rangers were busy undertaking works on the other commons in the county borough.
- **Upper Sirhowy Valley.**
The two lengths of cycleway, comprising more than 5 km of new route, had now been completed. Approximately £¼ million had been spent on access routes and a large amount of recycled material had been used on the project.
- **Aberbargoed.**
Small scale access works were ongoing. The aim was to create a joint ranger/education centre.
- **Penallta.**
The access works had been European funded.

- Invasive plant species.
It was too early to assess the success of the spraying of, in particular, Japanese Knotweed.
- Rural Access Network.
A substantial amount of work had been completed in terms of way marking long distance routes.
- Planning permission had been granted for the new footbridge at Llanbradach, south of The Rise.
- Negotiations were taking place in connection with a right of way below Hengoed viaduct.
- The leaflets for long distance walks were being updated. Copies would be available in libraries, tourist information centres etc as well as on the Caerphilly CBC Countryside Service website.
- Caerphilly Walk In Event on 10th May 2008 at Parc Penallta. There will be routes of 28 miles and 16 miles for experienced walkers together with a fun walk around the parc.

4. CAERPHILLY RIDGE AND HEADS OF THE VALLEYS (HOV) REGION PROJECT UPDATES

Andy Powell, Countryside Access Officer, gave an update on the two projects.

Heads of the Valleys Region

The access audit had been completed and significant access opportunities had been identified in each of the ten electoral wards within the HoV region. This was either through open areas such as common land/open access land and also linear routes such as the ProW network and promoted routes.

Each of the electoral wards lies within a Community First area. Every Community First area has or is working towards having a Local Action Plan (LAP). The Action Plans are at various stages, from very early to complete. The majority are at the draft stage and still open to ideas. The LAP is effectively a wish list of things that local residents would like to see undertaken in their communities.

Mr Powell advised that he had also met with officers from Blaenau Gwent CBC to discuss and agree ideas for cross-boundary projects. He hoped to meet with officers from Merthyr CBC in the near future. An update on progress would be given at the next meeting.

Caerphilly Ridge

Mr Powell reported that an informative meeting had taken place at the Forestry Commission Offices in Rudry at the end of February between officers of the Council, the Forestry Commission, Caerphilly Woodland Trust, Caerphilly Commoners and SAFE. Discussion centred upon access issues in the Caerphilly Ridge area in relation to walking, cycling and horse riding. Current opportunities together with strengths and weaknesses were discussed. It was hoped that a further meeting would be held during the summer which representatives from the various user groups in the locality would be invited to attend.

Since that time, a meeting had been held with Cardiff City Council to discuss cross boundary working and the linking up of promoted routes. The minutes from that meeting were available on request.

An update on progress would be provided at the next meeting.

5. TIMING OF FUTURE MEETINGS

In accordance with the decision taken at the last meeting Members were asked to consider whether at least one meeting of the Forum should be held late afternoon/evening.

Members discussed the matter in detail and recommended that it be included in the constitution of the LAF that one of its meetings be held late afternoon. The Secretary would prepare a report for Council.

6. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP) FUNDING

Under the proposed criteria for funding the Authority would be entitled to almost £65k per annum towards the implementation of the ROWIP. However, some of the Local Authorities had challenged the proposed formula and the present situation was therefore unclear.

Once the criteria have been approved, Local Authorities would be required to submit their bids for funding to CCW.

The Secretary would report on progress to the next meeting.

7. ANNUAL REPORT

It was agreed that Mr Liversuch and Mr Powell would prepare a draft Annual Report for consideration by the LAF.

8. PHOTO OF LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

A photo of the LAF members and officers was taken for the Caerphilly LAF website.

9. JUNE SITE VISIT/LAST MEETING

It was agreed that the June meeting would commence with a site visit in the morning followed by lunch and a formal meeting in the afternoon. The Secretary would inform members of the arrangements as soon as they had been finalised.

Members were reminded that the present Forum's three year term of office would come to an end at the end of June this year. Current members therefore needed to consider whether they wished to re-apply for membership.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The Secretary circulated a letter regarding the proposed closure of Golwyn y Bont footpath. There had been incidents of antisocial behaviour by some people using the path and the Highway Division had proposed that a section of the footpath be gated. The

Highways Division was seeking the views of the LAF on the proposals.

The Forum discussed the matter in detail and decided to make no comment on the proposal on this occasion.

- Keith Donovan queried how the budget for rights of way is broken down into the various areas. Mr Liversuch proposed that he invite Adrian Sander, Rights of Way, to attend the next meeting to give a brief outline.

The meeting closed at 12 noon.