



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN PARK ON FRIDAY, 12TH DECEMBER 2008 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mike Johnson – Chairman

Glyn Davies, Councillor Ron Davies, Sylvia Dolbear, Keith Donovan, Andrew Edwards, Keith Green, Elaine Gwynne, Robert Jones, William Lindsay, Alison Palmer, David Parry, Maggie Thomas & Nigel Yates.

Together with:

Norman Liversuch (Secretary), Phil Griffiths (Assistant Secretary), Dan Coles (RDP Delivery Manager), Adrian Sander (Senior Assistant Engineer, ROW), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance:

Samar Nawaz (Valrec).

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence had been received from Lorraine Howells.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2008 were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters arising - Membership

The Secretary advised that he had written to members of the previous Forum who had not, for various reasons, re-applied to join the new one.

Barry Clarke who had represented the Caerphilly Access Group on the previous Forum had contacted Mr Liversuch to advise that it had been his intention to re-apply for membership of the LAF. The Secretary of the Caerphilly Access Group had also confirmed that it supported Mr Clarke's nomination.

The Forum endorsed the proposal that Barry Clarke be re-appointed to the LAF to represent the Local Access Group. Mr Liversuch would initiate the formal application process.

4. OBJECTIVE 1 FUNDING

Phil Griffiths gave an update on the Objective 1 funded projects, which came to an end in June 2008.

The Countryside Section had been successful in securing Objective 1 funding for 14 projects over a 6-7 year period. Two studies at the beginning of the period i.e. the Upper Sirhowy Valley and the Caerphilly Common project had led to material schemes on the ground which included significant access improvements, upgrading of cycle ways, footpaths etc.

The Rural Key Fund part funded a number of small and medium sized rural businesses with business development projects eg. the Prince of Wales project in Rhymney. An events programme, including two long distance walks, had attracted visitors to the County Borough.

A significant amount of work had also been undertaken in the County Borough via the Rural Access Scheme. This included the installation of 60 way marker posts, 45 pedestrian access gates, 7 field gates and 60 Prow finger posts. Clearance work had also been undertaken and a total of 117 miles of promoted walking routes had been maintained and new sections of the Rhymney Riverside walk constructed. A series of leaflets of promoted walks had been produced under Objective 1, copies of which were available for members of the Forum.

In addition, it was noted that Caerphilly had been chosen as the lead body to drive the Valleys Regional Park Common Land initiative forward and a significant amount of money had been allocated from the Heads of the Valleys project to the Markham site. Local Action Plans were currently being prepared for a number of individual projects.

Whilst in the future the amount of money available, at least in the short term, is likely to be less, there will still be significant sums flowing into the Authority.

5. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RDP)

The Forum received a presentation from Dan Coles, RDP Delivery Manager, on the Rural Development Plan, the next source of major EU funding for rural projects. Mr Coles gave a brief explanation of the RDP and how RDP secured funding would help the Council's Countryside Section undertake new projects over the next few years.

Fourteen wards in the County Borough had been designated as rural and were therefore eligible to apply for support under the RDP. A further five wards were eligible to receive limited support from the RDP as they had been classed as service centres.

Out of the fourteen projects that had been put forward for RDP funding, eleven had been approved. Five of these projects were managed by the Countryside Section, two by the Council and the remaining four by external partners i.e. community councils/Groundwork, CAB/GAVO.

Mr Coles drew attention to the work being undertaken to protect the commons i.e. boundary restoration, bracken rolling, enforcement etc. and also the Great Outdoors Project, which builds on the former Access Project by promoting walking for health, cycling and horse riding, creating community links, making improvements to paths, access etc. He also referred to specific projects undertaken under "Developing an Active Destination", a wider infrastructure project to promote tourism, marketing and publicity, visitor accommodation etc.

Assurances were given that a very objective monitoring system was in place to ensure that the grant monies were used for the purposes intended.

6. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP)

Phil Griffiths, Principal Planner, briefed the Forum on the current position of the LDP in the County Borough.

The LDP is designed to provide a practical and detailed basis for the control of development and use of land through the development control system. It is the only document that the Planning Authority is statutorily required to produce as the framework of the land-use element of the planning system. The LDP was designed to be part of a package of documents and strategies that support and strengthen each other and have been subject to strategic environmental assessment, which places considerable weight on access issues. The new plan will take land use proposals through to 2021.

The Plan is divided into three parts i.e.

- Section A – identifies the development strategy for the county borough, based on three strategy areas i.e. Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area, the Northern Connections Corridor and the Southern Connections Corridor.
- Section B – contains countywide policies that will be used to make decisions on development proposals throughout the county borough.
- Section C – contains policies specific to the three strategy areas and also identifies the sites allocated for development for particular purposes and the sites that should be protected from development.

Mr Griffiths highlighted several policies within each category for the Forum's information.

It was noted that the strategy policies are very much based on the theme of sustainable development. In order to promote sustainable development within the county borough, all new development, with the exception of housing, will require a Design and Procurement BREEAM Assessment to accompany a planning application.

The Council is committed to encouraging a more sustainable transport infrastructure in line with the principles of sustainable development and will therefore favour integrated land use proposals that minimise the need to travel and which actively promote transport modes other than the car.

The Forum was advised that the consultation period for the plan had recently come to an end and a significant number of observations had been received on the proposals. The Council's Forward Planning Team is currently working through the correspondence.

Mr Griffiths invited members of the Forum to inspect the relevant documents pertaining to the LDP following the meeting.

7. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)

Adrian Sander, Senior Assistant Engineer (Rights of Way), updated the Forum on the implementation of the ROWIP.

Caerphilly CBC prepared its ROWIP in consultation with a wide range of users and controlling bodies and the final document was published on 10th January 2008. Amongst other things the ROWIP sets out a work programme that the Council wishes to implement over the 10-year period of the plan.

For the period 2008-09 Caerphilly CBC had a grant of £63,288 from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). The Countryside Council for Wales manages the grant on behalf of WAG.

Mr Sander drew attention to the table detailing works undertaken in the 2008-09 year and advised that with the exception of CP2, all the works identified have now been completed. Funding is being recovered from CCW as part of the ROWIP operation.

It was noted that the works would result in an overspend of £2,494, which is being met through other grant aid sources.

A list of works programmed in 2009-10, together with a list of contingencies, would be provided at the next meeting.

8. TERMS OF REFERENCE

A brief note setting out the terms of reference for the LAF had been sent out with the agenda for the meeting.

The Forum endorsed the Terms of Reference for the LAF.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Secretary advised that he had sought legal advice on the need for members of the LAF to register a declaration of interest in the following circumstances: -

- If a member of the Forum has a personal interest in land owned or occupied by him or her, which is the subject of discussion at the Forum, then the member should declare that and withdraw from the meeting while it is being discussed.
- If the member's interest in land being discussed is one, which is common to the member and to other, people (such as being used for walking), then the member should declare that at the meeting but can continue to take part in the discussion.

The Forum endorsed the recommendation that an item headed 'Declarations of Interest' be included on the agenda for all future meetings of the LAF.

10. COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES (CCW)

It was agreed that Sarah Tyndall, CCW, would be invited to attend the next meeting of the LAF to give a short presentation on the Welsh National Access Register, a web based information resource for access maps.

11. DATES AND VENUES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Forum agreed the following dates for future meetings: -

- Friday, 20th March 2009, 10am to 1 pm at Ty Penallta.
- Friday, 19th June 2009.
(This meeting may be designated as a site visit in the morning followed by a meeting at Ty Penallta in the afternoon).

- Friday, 25th September 2009.
(This meeting may be designated as a site visit in the morning followed by a meeting at Ty Penallta in the afternoon).
- Friday, 11th December 2009, 10am to 1pm at Ty Penallta.

The Secretary would keep Forum members up to date with arrangements for all the above meetings.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Copies of the following were made available to all those in attendance: -

- LAF Annual Report 2007-08.
- Minutes of the National Access Forum for Wales meeting held in July 2008.
- Recreation and Access Newsletter Summer/Autumn edition 2008.
- “Around the Corner” – a joyful reminder that nature can be found around every corner in the Caerphilly County Borough. The book contains stunning photographs and celebrates achievements under the EU Objective 1 Funding Programme.

The meeting closed at 11.25 am.