



## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN PARK ON FRIDAY, 19TH JUNE 2009 AT 10.00 AM

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#### PRESENT:

Mike Johnson – Chairman

Barry Clarke, Glyn Davies, Councillor Ron Davies, Sylvia Dolbear, Andrew Edwards, Keith Green, Elaine Gwynne, Robert Jones, Garry Lewis, William Lindsay, David Parry

#### Together with:

Norman Liversuch (Secretary), Phil Griffiths (Assistant Secretary), Andy Powell (Countryside Access Officer), Owen Struthers (Countryside Planning Assistant), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

#### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

#### 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Keith Donovan, Lorraine Howells, Alison Palmer, Maggie Thomas and Nigel Yates. Adrian Sander and June Piper.

#### 3. WELCOME NEW MEMBER

A welcome was extended to Garry Lewis who had been appointed to the Forum to represent the Community Council Association.

#### 4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2009 were approved as a correct record.

#### 5. Matters Arising – Off Road Seminar (Minute No. 8)

It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum was being held at Cwmcarn Forest Drive and that there would be an opportunity to discuss the problems associated with off roading in that area at that time. The Secretary advised that the Authority is currently working with the Forestry Commission and the Police in connection with this matter.

## **6. ROWIP UPDATE**

In the absence of Adrian Sander, who had tendered his apologies for the meeting, the Forum received an update on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) from Phil Griffiths.

It was noted that the Authority had received confirmation of funding from the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). Nineteen projects had been identified. The works were spread throughout the county borough and had been split into 3 groups i.e. Essential, low use groups and contingency actions.

It was pointed out that it was possible that not all the contingency works would be completed this year due to the limited finance available.

It was requested that copies of the list of intended projects be forwarded to Forum members for their information.

## **7. FUNDING UPDATES**

Phil Griffiths updated the Forum on the funding that is likely to be available and the bids that are currently being put together.

One of the largest funds is the HoV (Heads of the Valleys) and this is being sought via several funding programmes eg. Tourism (Markham), strategic (knotweed). Perhaps the most significant to the LAF are the HARP's (Holistic Area Plans) of which the county borough has two i.e. Upper Rhymney Valley (URV) and Mid Sirhowy Valley (MSV). Bids are being submitted for four major access schemes in the URV in 2009/10. In the MSV, bids are being put forward for two walking and two cycling projects.

The other funding source the Authority is concerned with at present is the Valleys Regional Park. A major European bid has been successful and a £20m programme has been agreed. £9m from Europe has been spread across the geographical area. Of this, £5m has been set aside for cycleways/routes etc. - a sustainable network of trails for the public to explore.

There is £130k in the RDP fund for the Great Outdoors Project. Twelve projects have been identified to date, ranging from short trails to larger cross border initiatives.

SPLASH grant, which is available via the Environment Agency for improving access to waterways, is being looked at as a possible source of funding for upgrading the circular route at Pen-y-fan Pond. In addition, there is a meeting in a couple of weeks to discuss the Section 15 grants from WAG.

The Forum was advised that it was hoped to secure funding for improvements in the Mynydd Machen area when the next round of the ASLF (Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund) comes up in September and that it had been decided to delay the PONT application for twelve months.

## **8. COUNTRYSIDE STRATEGY**

The Forum received a presentation on the draft Countryside Strategy from Owen Struthers, Countryside Planning Assistant.

Owen tabled copies of the original strategy produced in 1998, together with the draft new strategy document. He gave an overview of the purpose of the Countryside Strategy; the need for a review of the strategy; how the review has been undertaken and what is hoped to be achieved.

It was noted that since the original strategy was produced, three key changes have occurred i.e. legislation, delivery of projects and the functions carried out by the Countryside Section. The need to renew the strategy has come about through the success in expanding the role and function of the section in countryside matters. For example, climate change, direct knotweed treatment, the RDP and work on the commons are all new areas of the Council's work.

The Countryside Strategy undertakes a number of different roles; primarily it provides an umbrella document to co-ordinate the different activities of the Countryside Section, establishing key objectives to be delivered. The strategy therefore has a key role in identifying links between different areas of the Countryside Section's activities. The document identifies key objectives and policies that the Council will strive to achieve and can therefore act as an important support document for funding applications.

It was stressed that this was very much a working draft at present and that the Forum's views would be sought on the document as part of the formal consultation process.

A Member of the Forum asked whether the green shaded areas within the document could be removed and if the font size of the typeface could be increased to a minimum of 12.

## **9. CONSULTATION PAPER ON CROW GUIDANCE**

Andy Powell briefed the Forum on the consultation paper on CroW guidance notes prepared by CCW. The paper is currently out for consultation to the relevant authorities in Wales i.e. 3 national parks, the Forestry Commission and CCW.

## **10. LAF CONFERENCE**

Mike Johnson briefed the Forum on the key issues raised at the LAF conference he had attended with Andy Powell in Builth Wells on 7th May 2009 viz: -

- Availability of resources for the implementation of the ROWIP.
- The Welsh National Access Register.
- The recruitment of volunteers to assist with footpath surveys etc.
- Disabled Access.
- The role of Local Access Forums in England.

## **11. SEPTEMBER MEETING**

The Secretary advised the Forum of the arrangements for the meeting of the LAF on 25th September 2009 at Cwmcarn Forest Drive.

Members were asked to meet at the Cwmcarn Forest Drive Visitor Centre at 9.30 am where they would be introduced to staff and representatives of the Forestry Commission.

The morning visit would be followed by lunch and a formal meeting of the LAF at the Visitor Centre at 2.00 pm.

**12. LEAFLETS**

The following leaflets were circulated at the meeting for information: -

- Upper Sirhowy Valley Cydcoed Community Woodland Project.
- Explore Caerphilly - Activities leaflet.
- Valleys Walking Festival.
- Common Sense – Common Land.
- Get Going; Stroll On and Long Distance Walks.

**13. ANNUAL REPORT**

It was agreed that Norman Liversuch and Andy Powell would prepare the Annual Report.

**14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- Copies of the Walking and Cycling Action Plan were tabled for Members' information. In addition, various reports were available for the new members of the Forum, including "Managing Public Access", last year's Annual Report and "Out in the Country".
- Interpretation Signs.

An example of the design it was hoped to roll out across the county borough was displayed at the meeting for the Forum's information. The signs would be positioned at strategic access points on areas of open land.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am.