



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT CWMCARN FOREST DRIVE, CWMCARN ON FRIDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 1.05 PM

PRESENT:

Mike Johnson - Chairman

Barry Clarke, Sylvia Dolbear, Keith Donovan, Andrew Edwards, Keith Green, Robert Jones, William Lindsay, David Parry, Maggie Thomas, Sarah Tindal, Nigel Yates

Together with:

Phil Griffiths (Assistant Secretary), Andrew Powell (Countryside Access Officer), Adrian Sander (Rights of Way), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), Rebecca Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman referred to the sad news that Sue Steer had passed away in August. The forum stood for a minutes silence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the meeting.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Davies, Glyn Davies, Elaine Gwynne, Garry Lewis.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2009 were approved as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Off Road Seminar (Minute No. 5)

A Member requested an update following discussions by the Secretary with the Forestry Commission and the Police. The Forum was advised a report would be brought to the next meeting.

6. PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF COUNTRYSIDE RANGER

The Forum received a presentation on health and access in the county borough from Jon Hole, Chief Countryside Ranger.

Jon highlighted the changes that had taken place to the working environment within the Valley areas, with little adjustment to people's diets. This had resulted in increased levels of obesity and cases of chronic heart disease, with only 28% of people taking some form of physical activity.

In conjunction with Gwent Health Care, the Countryside started weekly healthy walks, making the most of the fact that CCBC is 80% in the countryside. Referrals, to begin with, are made by a person's GP and a nurse is present for the initial walks. The walks have increased in popularity and there are now over 18 walks per week. Due to this success, regular walkers have been trained as walk leaders and there are now 6 independent walks available.

School children are also encouraged to take part in outdoor pursuits and Jon gave a practical presentation of an activity used to make physical activity fun and positive.

The Forum was advised the walks had become self-sufficient and as a result users are gaining confidence. Walks were also covered by the Health and Safety Executive.

7. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)

Adrian Sander, Senior Assistant Engineer (Rights of Way), updated the Forum on the ongoing and proposed works within Caerphilly borough's ROWIP 2009-2011. As agreed at the Forum's meeting in December 2008, copies of CCBC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan Proposed Works for the periods 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 were tabled at the meeting.

For the period 2009-2010 the agreed works totaled £63758.70, leaving a shortfall of £470.70. For the period 2010-2011, agreed works currently totaled £22,159.35, leaving an available balance of £41,128.65. The Forum was advised that if additional works arose, the CCW would be asked to contribute.

Adrian clarified the process of sampling for rights of way routes and the scoring system used. The Forum raised concerns that the scoring system would not be a true indicator of the routes' suitability/accessibility.

8. FUNDING

Phil Griffiths updated the Forum on the funding available and ongoing bids:

- Valleys Partnership had been successful in receiving £21m of WAG funding. There were 52 bids submitted, 9 from CCBC. To date, 3 bids had received direct approval: Pen-y-fan Pond (£120k), Penallta Park/Tredomen (£400k), Crossing the Mountain Project (£320k).
- Additional funding had been ring fenced for cycle-ways (£4m). This funding was now secure, but individual projects have yet to be allocated.
- Ring fenced funding had also been approved for bridle way improvements.
- HOV funding for 4 schemes mentioned at previous meetings were still outstanding, but the feedback received had been positive. A couple of smaller applications still needed to be submitted (Walks Leader Training and Walks Leaflets).
- Several bids for new, or upgrading of existing visitor centres had been made including exciting proposals at Markham and Pen-y-fan Pond Country Park.

The Forum thanked Phil for his presentation and sought an update as to the borough's Japanese Knotweed termination project. They were advised additional internal money had

been sourced to employ extra staff to assist Gethin Bowes, Invasive Plant Species Officer, over the next month. However another plant – Giant Hog Weed – was now on the increase. The weed, although easy to kill early on, was a dangerous irritant.

A Member of the Forum questioned who was responsible for removing rubbish from Caerphilly's riverbanks. Officer advised it would depend on accessibility issues, however the authority did support the 'Keep Wales Tidy' campaign and limited funding was available to assist with projects.

A Member of the Forum asked if stones could be placed at the entrance to Rudry Common to stop fly tipping. Officers advised they would look into this.

9. ANNUAL REPORT

Copies of the draft Caerphilly Local Access Forum Annual Report 2008-2009 were tabled at the meeting. Andy Powell reviewed the format of the report and sought Members' comments as to its contents. In addition the Forum were invited to make suggestions as to the future work plan.

The Forum agreed to amalgamate the Chair and Secretary's forewords and sought confirmation from officers as to the remit of the group.

Interim suggestions from the Forum were as follows:

- a report on the state of accommodation and the effectiveness of grants received;
- the effectiveness of tourism schemes;
- regular updates from the Chief Countryside Ranger, in light of the earlier presentation given;
- the issue of fly tipping; and
- training for the Forum members on Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

The Forum were requested to consider the document at their leisure and contact Andy by 30th October 2009, with any additional suggestions/comments.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- CCW Access Map – further walks had been added to the CCW website and would be available soon;
- Lower Rhymney River Circular Walk Leaflets – a copy of the latest leaflet (Rhymney River Circular Walk) was handed out at the meeting;
- Valley's Walking Festival - Caerphilly hosted five walks that were well attended.

The Chairman thanked Cwmcarn Forest Drive Visitor Centre for hosting the meeting and to Michael Owen and Marc Langley for the guided tour given earlier in the day.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12th December 2009.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm.