



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, ON
FRIDAY, 11TH DECEMBER 2009 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mike Johnson – Chairman

Barry Clarke, Glyn Davies, Andrew Edwards, Robert Jones, William Lindsay, Alison Palmer, David Parry, Maggie Thomas & Nigel Yates.

Together with:

Norman Liversuch (Secretary), Phil Griffiths (Assistant Secretary), Andy Powell (Countryside Access Officer), Brian Begg (Exercise Specialist), Adrian Sander (Senior Assistant Engineer, ROW), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), 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 Councillor Ron Davies, Sylvia Dolbear, Elaine Gwynne, Garry Lewis, Marc Langley and Sarah Tindal.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2009 were approved as a correct record subject to Minute No 5 being amended to read as follows: -

The Secretary advised that prior to the meeting he had been approached by a local man who had ridden off road motorcycles professionally at the highest level in Europe and who was interested in setting up an off road facility in the County Borough. Officers agreed to meet with him to discuss the matter further.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Minute No. 5

Officers had met with Mr C. Tiley and advised him as to what he should do if he wished to progress his ideas. He had also been put in touch with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council who were working with a local landowner to develop an off road motorcycle site.

In addition, a local Police Inspector was proposing to set up a group to work with people who had been caught riding illegally by the Police or who were interested in riding off road, to offer them training in how to ride properly and legally. A similar project had been established in Oxford and had proved to be a success. The Secretary advised that he would follow this matter up with the Police and would keep the Forum informed of progress.

Minute No 8 - Funding

At the last meeting a Member of Forum had enquired about the possibility of large stones being placed at the entrance to Rudry Common to prevent fly tipping. Phil Griffiths advised the Forum that he had investigated this matter but did not think it would be practical to seal off the entrance.

5. HEALTHY HEARTS PROGRAMME - PRESENTATION BY BRIAN BEGG, EXERCISE SPECIALIST

The Forum welcomed Brian Begg, Exercise Specialist, who attended the meeting to give a presentation on the Healthy Hearts programme he coordinates in Caerphilly.

Brian outlined the background to the scheme and explained how it was initially targeted at cardiac patients who had been referred from their GP. Gentle exercise classes and walks led by trained volunteers, take place on a regular basis at venues right across the county borough. The walks are becoming increasingly popular and are generally advertised by 'word of mouth' and also on the Council's Countryside website. During the period January to September 2009 there had been a total of 882 led walks attended by 5931 individuals. Some of the walking groups have become firmly established and have developed incentive schemes whereby badges are awarded to participants for their achievements.

The Forum thanked Brian for his very interesting presentation and wished him well for the future.

6. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)

Adrian Sander, Rights of Way, updated the Forum on the ongoing and proposed works in connection with the ROWIP. It was noted that 22 out of the 26 identified works had now been completed; 2 were currently being progressed and the remaining 2 would be completed in January.

Mr Sander advised that he had applied for extra funding from CCW for further works that had been identified to the value of £27k. The outcome of this bid was expected in February 2010.

7. FUNDING

Phil Griffiths gave an update on current and future funding opportunities. He advised the Forum that the main news was the amount of funding secured in relation to cycle way bids. The Authority had been successful in obtaining 100% funding for the projects identified.

Five bids for countryside projects had been submitted, the largest being the creation of a link from Hollybush to south Tredegar (£1million). The second application involved a £340k project in the Sirhowy Valley, for which £315k had been secured. The work was due to be completed in the summer of 2010. The third project involved a link from Parc Cwm Darren to Fochriw and Pontlloyn. A grant of £280k had been secured for the Argoed to Oakdale link and £200k for the canal project. One of the outstanding bids was for a bridleway for which the funder had asked for an additional study. A total of £800k had been ring fenced for a strategic bridleway across South Wales.

Approval had been received for £150k, mainly from HoV funding, for general access improvements. A total of £75k had been obtained for improvements around Parc Cwm Darren lake. £40k had been secured for work to the riverside walk between New Tredegar and Abertwyssg. In addition, there was £10k available for access improvements at Bryn Bach Park. £12k had been approved for works in Aberbargoed and just under £60k for general access improvements in the Argoed ward.

Mr Griffiths then referred to the preparation of the Water Access Strategy. He advised that the Authority had adopted more reservoirs and had identified that there were now 15 significant waterways managed by the Local Authority. It was felt that the time was right for the Council to prepare a strategy, which would identify how these could be used and accessed by the public. The strategy would also look at access to rivers. The Council had prepared an application for grant aid for a new visitor centre at Penyfan Country Park. This was due to be submitted later that day.

8. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT - TRAINING EVENT

The Chairman briefed the Forum on a recent training event he had attended at Parc Cwm Darren. The event had been organised by Andy Powell, CCBC's Countryside Access Officer and led by Andy Johnson, Director of the Fieldfare Trust. The Fieldfare Trust works with people with disabilities and countryside managers to improve access to the countryside.

The Chair informed the Forum that the event had been very well organised and had helped him appreciate some of the access difficulties experienced by people with disabilities. He recommended the training to those Members of the Forum who had not yet attended any of the events.

9. DDA

Andy Powell referred to the impact of the DDA on the work of the Countryside Section. In particular he drew attention to some of the difficulties that users of mobility scooters and people with disabilities are experiencing in accessing the country parks where access furniture (barriers and gates etc) had been installed to prevent illegal access by motor vehicles. This had led the Authority to realise that it would need to undertake an access audit on all entrances to the country parks within the County Borough to assess whether they met the current access standards as developed by the Fieldfare Trust and to identify what changes if any were needed.

Andy was aiming to write the access audit for Parc Coetir Bargoed by February 2010. It was hoped that this would then be considered by a sub-group of the LAF with the final draft being presented to the March meeting of the LAF. The criteria would then be tested against the remainder of the County Borough in order to identify the best access furniture to use in future.

It was agreed that Andy would invite members of the LAF to attend a sub-group meeting in February 2010.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 11.15 am and wished everyone a very happy Christmas.