



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, ON FRIDAY, 18TH JUNE 2010 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mike Johnson – Chairman
Lorraine Howells - Vice Chairman

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

Together with:

Norman Liversuch (Manager Countryside and Landscape & Secretary to the LAF),
Phil Griffiths (Principal Planner & Assistant Secretary to the LAF), Andy Powell (ROW &
Countryside Access Officer), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

Observers: Andrew Hobbs (Forestry Commission),

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Andrew Edwards, Alison Palmer, June Piper,
Sara Tindal and Chris Heaps (CCW).

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Hobbs, Forestry Commission, to the meeting.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2010 were approved as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Norman advised the Forum that the off road motorcycling project with Gwent Police was due
to commence the next day. The 10 week project would educate youngsters on access in the
countryside, environmental schemes, sensible riding, first aid etc. As part of the programme
the students would be taken to an official off road track in Mid Wales.

5. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)

A sum of £63k has been allocated towards the implementation of the ROWIP in 2010/11 in line with the previous year's grant. As part of the criteria for this year, there is a requirement to undertake a DDA project, a nature conservation project and an access project. Andy advised that officers had identified 20 projects, which included 2 DDA projects and one for nature conservation. This is the final year of the three year programme and funding for next year is not guaranteed.

Members of the Forum noted the information and sought further details on the projects that had been identified, in particular, those relating to the DDA improvements. Andy advised that one related to a footpath in Ystrad Mynach that required resurfacing/improving and the other to the provision of handrails.

Further information was sought on the total spend on ROW. It was explained that there is a wide range of work being undertaken in the countryside through various sources i.e. countryside section, community first programme, voluntary sector, HoV funding for environmental works etc and that it would be extremely difficult to collate all the relevant information.

6. FUNDING UPDATE

Phil Griffiths gave an update on the latest news with regard to current and future funding and the works being undertaken.

A path in Argoed, which was subject to a washout, has been renewed with £3,500 to £4,000 funding from HoV. Work has also been carried out on Caerphilly Mountain to improve access to the common and woodlands. The scheme is costing £40k with the access element amounting to £6-£8k. The aim is to create a Gateway feature to draw visitors into Caerphilly.

The Sirhowy Valley cycleway scheme is out to tender and it is hoped that work will commence in July/August. The contract relating to access improvements at Penyfan Pond funded by VRP and WAG has been finalised.

The bridleway study for the Valleys Regional Park has been undertaken and £800k has been allocated for the whole project. The aim is to create a long distance bridleway throughout South Wales. The money is ring fenced but it is not yet known how much will be available for each Authority.

Proposals to create "The Gren Way" in memory of the legendary Welsh cartoonist Gren, who died in January 2007, were being developed in conjunction with other partners.

7. WATER RECREATION

A Company who has undertaken a number of water based projects in Wales has been commissioned to carry out a study to look at making best use of our water sites. The commission was now under way. The consultants have arrived at five priorities for Caerphilly viz: -

1. How to improve health through the use of water - proposals for Parc Cwm Darran and Cwmcarn.
2. To concentrate on recreational proposals at Penyfan Pond, which the consultants see as a key resource in the county borough.
3. Peripatetic Arts Development project - How to draw people in to use our water features.

4. Caerphilly Castle moat - To look at the corporate use of the moat including the possibility of a water taxi.
5. A fishing event, which would probably be led by the Environment Agency.

The consultants are setting up groups to look at the five schemes. It was anticipated that biodiversity would be addressed as a cross cutting theme across all five priorities. In terms of funding there is 50% funding from HoV, 25% from SPLASH and 25% of our own resources.

The views of the Forum were invited and a member pointed out as the owner of land around Butetown Pond she should have been consulted on any proposals for that area.

Phil Griffiths advised that the proposal was at concept stage at the moment but acknowledged that landowners should be consulted on any development plans that may affect them.

Clarification was sought on the responsibility for the maintenance of the reservoirs, which the Council had taken over from Corus. Officers advised that Corus had wanted to drain the reservoirs and relinquish their ongoing responsibility. The Council had looked at them from a range of factors eg. Biodiversity, landscape and recreation and would now be responsible for their ongoing maintenance.

8. DDA PROJECT

The Forum received an update from Andy Powell. At the December LAF meeting it was agreed that a sub group be set up to undertake an access audit with a view to creating a template to use to measure access standards within the country parks etc.

The sub group had subsequently met in February and considered the issues it was hoped to overcome. The next stage would be to try the access audit in the field to tests its suitability. Unfortunately, due to the pressure of work it had not been possible to undertake this trial but hopefully it would take place in August. Andy would report back to the next meeting on progress.

9. LAF CONFERENCE

Mike Johnson and Phil Griffiths attended the Conference, which was held in Builth Wells on 20th May 2010. The Forum received an overview of the main issues that were discussed.

The first item on the agenda was Glastir. The new scheme reflects the Welsh Assembly Government's new environmental commitments as well as the new strategies on food and farming. The Assembly is committed to ensuring that the scheme achieves best possible value for money and prioritises spending on those areas that bring the widest possible benefits. There will be two levels to the scheme - entry level and high level. Applications to join the entry level scheme will commence in July 2010 and agreements will be signed from January 2012. They will be five year agreements. The high level scheme commences in January 2012 but expressions of interest will be made this year.

The aim of the scheme is to build on existing access provisions. It is proposed that the higher level scheme targets strategic routes i.e. national trails, coastal path and the national cycle network and priority areas - routes starting or finishing in Community First areas and an area within 2km of the coast.

It was noted that WAG aims to produce a map layer to target either areas where permissive access would be desirable or where it has been successfully implemented already under other schemes.

WAG is asking LAFs to decide which successful existing permissive access areas/routes they would like to see targeted within the Targeted Element (TE) of Glastir within their area. LAFs also need to consider where new permissive access would be beneficial, fitting into their ROWIP. Norman advised members that he was meeting a representative from WAG later in the day to discuss the matter in more detail. As the information is required by the end of July, it was proposed that a sub group be set up which would report back to WAG.

The following members agreed to sit on the sub-group: -

Lorraine Howells, Glyn Parry, Garry Lewis and Maggie Thomas. June Piper would also be invited to participate. Keith Donovan indicated that he would have liked to have joined the sub group but that he had jury service commitments during that period. Barry Clarke offered to assist with any disability issues that may arise.

Presentation by Ramblers - Research by the Ramblers Association had concluded that 50% of paths appeared to be open in Wales. They are launching an initiative called 'Activate' whereby all types of walks are put onto a central base. Ramblers Cymru are expanding and have 3 more members of staff to assist with their objectives.

The third item on the agenda at the conference was an update on the coastal access survey by Quentin Grimley, CCW. The fourth was a presentation from representatives of the Brecon Beacons National Park on bridleways and the number of serious and fatal horse riding accidents.

The fifth item concerned the implementation of the ROWIP, LAF consultation and how the monies were being spent. It was noted that the findings of questions asked across Wales are available on line and it was interesting to see how some LA's were spending the money. The general feeling was that there should be closer monitoring on expenditure.

The keynote speech was from Mike German AM, Chair of the Welsh Assembly Sustainability Committee, entitled "Engaging in Sustainability ' the work of the committee and the role of stakeholders".

10. SITE VISIT

For the benefit of the new members Norman explained that one of the LAF meetings held each year consists of a field trip in the morning followed by lunch and a meeting of the LAF in the afternoon. This year it was proposed that arrangements be made for members to visit Penyfan Pond in the morning to view the improvements that have been made there and the potential for other enhancements.

As some of the members were not available for the 17th September, which was the date originally agreed for the visit, it was agreed that Norman would liaise with Sharon to identify an alternative date and time.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Copies of the Wales Valley Walking Festival 2010 leaflets were circulated together with mileage claim forms for LAF members.
- It was noted that Ron Southall had approached the Authority with regard to the Twmbarlwm Ancient Monument. Mr Southall is concerned about damage to the monument and litter in the surrounding area. A group has been set up to investigate the issue and will report back in due course.

- The issue of areas of land being fenced off on Rudry common was raised. Norman advised that the Council's Legal Section is investigating this matter.
- Current status of Ynys Hywel. Norman advised that the centre is currently used by the Education Department for outdoor education and activities.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the meeting and closed the meeting at 12.05pm.