



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT TY PENALLTA , TREDOMEN, ON
FRIDAY, 3RD DECEMBER 2010 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mike Johnson – Chairman

Glyn Davies, Councillor Ron Davies, Keith Donovan, Andrew Edwards, Keith Green, Elaine Gwynne, Robert Jones, Garry Lewis, David Parry & Maggie Thomas.

Together with:

Norman Liversuch (Manager Countryside and Landscape Services & Secretary to the LAF), Phil Griffiths (Principal Planner and Assistant Secretary to the LAF), Andy Powell (ROW & Countryside Access Officer), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), Emma Louise Felkin (Forestry Commission), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Lorraine Howells, Alison Palmer and James Mak (Forestry Commission).

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st October 2010 were approved as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Norman advised that the consultation period for the draft Countryside Strategy had ended. Several comments had been received, which would be assessed and reported back to the LAF in due course.

5. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)

Andy gave an update on the current allocation of funding. He reminded the Forum that the Authority had received £63k to spend on improvements to the rights of way network this year. A minimum of 40% of the total amount had to be claimed by the end of November and the remainder by the end of February 2011. There were indications from WAG of some surplus funding in the region of £6k for every local authority this year, although this had not yet been

confirmed. There were also indications that the ROWIP 3 year programme would be extended for another year but that the grant would be reduced by as much as 50%. Andy would notify the Forum when he had received further news.

6. FUNDING

The Forum received a very detailed presentation from Phil Griffiths and Andy Powell, on the funding of access works in the county borough, with particular reference to the areas applicable to the LAF. The presentation addressed the following: How much the Council spends on access; Who is involved in access provision; Where the money comes from; Actual funding amounts for 2009/10; Example projects and 2010/11 projects.

Slides were shown of various projects that had been undertaken together with a brief description of each. Reference was made to the individuals and organisations involved together with the main sources of funding. The actual funding received in 2009/2010 totalling £966,000, was made up as follows: -

	£
• ROWIP	63,000
• Safe Routes to Schools	344,000
• Heads of the Valleys Funding	174,000
• WAG Environment via VRPK (EU)	60,000
• CCW	5,000
• RDP	56,000
• Communities First (direct and grants)	44,000
• Countryside and Landscape	90,000
• Urban Renewal	40,000
• Maintenance	90,000
<u>Total</u>	<u>£966,000</u>

The final part of the presentation listed the projects scheduled for 2010/11, ranging from Safe Routes to Schools in the Aber Valley (work is ongoing); Caerphilly Mountain; Penyfan Pond (final year of the scheme); Sirhowy Valley cycleway (currently underway); Riverside Walk, Pontlottyn and Abertridwr; Hollybush Woodlands; Butetown Reservoir and Parc Cwm Darren. Officers advised that they were already looking at projects for 2011/12.

During the course of the presentation members of the Forum raised various issues in relation to the schemes undertaken and the sources of funding. In addition, clarification was sought on whether any surveys had been undertaken to identify whether people who used the footpath networks were local or had travelled some distance. Officers advised that participants in the annual walk-in event and other organised walks are asked to complete a questionnaire.

With reference to VRP funding, it was noted that monitoring is an important part of the criteria and consequently a number of face-to-face interviews and monitoring exercises were being undertaken. In terms of measuring the success of the schemes that are being undertaken, it was suggested that there should be some sort of benchmark in place to assess the effectiveness of any promotional work that is undertaken.

The Forum was advised that the Authority is currently considering working with Rudry Community Council on a pilot project to look at the network in that area. It was planned to hold a 3 day training course involving map reading, surveying/identifying paths and handling small tools. If this proves successful the project will be rolled out across the county borough.

The Chairman thanked officers for the informative presentation.

7. WATER RECREATION

A draft water related recreation code of conduct has been produced, copies of which had been sent to all members of the Forum for their views. The code was based on the 5 point structure of the Countryside Code promoted by CCW. Members' views were sought on the five sections set out in the draft paper: -

- Be safe - plan ahead.
- Respect the local community.
- Protect the natural environment.
- Consider other people.
- Leave no trace of your visit.

The Forum's views on the draft code were invited. A request was made that the section headed "Protect the natural environment" appear as the first item. The need for a clear definition of inland water accessibility was also requested.

Any further comments on the draft code should be sent to Norman as soon as possible.

8. PARC COETIR BARGOD

Andy circulated copies of the access survey that had been undertaken last year at Parc Coetir Bargod. A total number of 89 people were interviewed during the seven-week consultation period during July and August 2010 to gauge their views on some of the access equipment that was already in the park.

Parc Coetir Bargod currently has 22 access points leading into it from the surrounding communities of Bargoed, Gilfach, Aberbargoed, Britannia and Pengam. Of these access points 9 consist of a vehicle access barrier adjacent to a stand-alone pedestrian/cyclist access feature, whilst another 13 consist of a stand-alone pedestrian/cyclist access feature integrated into the boundary of the country park.

The results of the survey show that of all the structures in place the 'K' barrier is the only one that has caused no access problems although it was noted that officers had not been able to interview users of double buggies or large mobility scooters. 'K' barriers are supposed to allow ease of access by users of large mobility scooters and double buggies and for this reason a separate test was conducted with a user of a double buggy and a mobility scooter in September at the Pengam entrance to the park. The user of the mobility scooter found the 'K' barrier easy to negotiate but the user of the double buggy found it difficult to use due to its narrow width. For this reason, it is recommended that the main use of a path/access point is identified and if feasible, consultation be undertaken with users before changes to access control structures are undertaken.

The Forum noted the results of the survey and proposals contained therein.

9. LAF CHAIRS' CONFERENCE

David Parry presented his report on the LAF Chair's Conference held on 12th October 2010, which he had attended on behalf of the Forum. A summary of his report is set out below.

Glastir

Concern was expressed with regard to the lack of unified policy across LAF areas. There were also concerns raised in relation to the mapping exercise process. The Ramblers Association are organising a meeting on 20th October 2010 to discuss permissive paths

under agri-environment schemes. A query was raised about the insurance responsibility of landowners in respect of permissive paths. The new Glastir maps supplied to applicants did not include ROWs.

Inland Water

The need for definition of inland water was raised. Local management agreements were critical in respect of spawning fish and access opportunities for canoeists and other non-motorised craft. This is being looked at by CCW, WAG, Forestry Commission and Dwr Cymru. Bob Darbyshire, Cardiff LAF, will attend a meeting on access to water on 25 November.

ROWIP Funding

Local Authorities need to be creative in applying. The present WAG Minister is supportive. Jean Rosenfeld to write to WAG on behalf of LAFs.

The Planning System in Wales

Does the planning system successfully safeguard public ROW? Currently consultation on electronic application form which may be applied to all Local Authorities in Wales and seems to be a defensive document rather than ROWIP based with no rights given to the proposed ROW. Members recommended Powys document, "Development and Public Rights of Way - A Practitioner's Guide".

Wales Coastal Path

Some areas are experiencing problems with landowners and large estuary crossings. Complete path unlikely to open in 2012 as planned.

WAG Elections May 2011

Geoffrey Williams to draft letter and send to chairs for comments before Jean Rosenfeld sends to political parties and press release highlighting work of LAFs.

Wind Turbine Developments and PROW

Recommends no PROW within 3 times height of turbine. LAFs to treat turbines as any other major development.

Paul Bucknall Conwy LAF

Lots of work being done by Conwy LAF and the British Horse Society (BHS) in developing routes on FC land. The FC have now blocked this and also routes in Neath Port Talbot, against the existing concordat between the BHS and FC. WAG to be asked for clarification.

The Chair thanked Mr Parry for attending the Conference on his behalf.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Reference was made to the 75th Anniversary of the Ramblers Association in November at which Maggie Thomas had been presented with an award for all the good work she had undertaken over the years. The Forum congratulated Maggie on this achievement.
- The Forum was advised that a public meeting had been held in Crosskeys at which the Friends of Twmbarlwm had been established. A meeting was being set up with relevant parties with a view to establishing joint arrangements to manage the site in future.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting and expressed his best wishes for a Happy Christmas.

The meeting closed at 11.57 am.