



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN PARK,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON FRIDAY, 20TH JANUARY 2012 AT 10.00 A.M.**

PRESENT:

Barry Clarke, Glyn Davies, Councillor Ron Davies, John R. Davies, Sylvia Dolbear, Keith Donovan, Andrew Edwards, Roger Evans, Byron Grubb, Robert Jones, William Lindsay, Alison Palmer, David Parry and 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) and 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 Elaine Gwynne, Lorraine Howells, Garry Lewis and Nigel Yates.

3. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Ron Davies, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning (including responsibility for the countryside) congratulated both new and former members on their appointment to the fourth Local Access Forum (LAF) and welcomed them to the first meeting.

Councillor Davies outlined the role of the LAF and highlighted the important contribution it makes to the Local Authority and in particular, the Countryside Service. The Forum represents the interests of people that use the countryside for work or recreation and provides advice to the Local Authority, CCW and Welsh Government about improving public access to the countryside.

Norman Liversuch, Secretary to the Forum and Manager of the Countryside and Landscape Service, also welcomed everyone to the meeting. He advised that the first proper meeting of the new Forum would take place on Friday, 10th February 2012 and would deal with administrative matters, including the appointment of the Chair and

Vice Chair.

Norman then invited all to introduce themselves and provide a brief description of their role and interest in the Local Access Forum.

4. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS IN CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH AND THE WORK OF THE FORUM

Philip Griffiths and Andrew Powell provided an overview of countryside access in the county borough, the project work on access undertaken by the Council and the work undertaken by the first three Access Forums.

The presentation was divided into five sections i.e. Open Access Land; Rights of Way; the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP); Funding and a slide show of the schemes that are being undertaken this year.

The first part of the presentation concerned Open Access Land, which came about as a result of the CROW Act 2000. Andy divided this section into five parts i.e. Access to the Countryside; Rights of Way and Road Traffic; Nature Conservation and Wildlife Enforcement; Areas of Outstanding Beauty and Miscellaneous and Supplementary.

The CROW Act gave a new right of access on foot for the purposes of open-air recreation to open country, common land and land dedicated as access land. In Caerphilly CCW designated 5783 hectares of land as access land. This is comprised of 497 hectares of open country, 3588 ha registered common land and 1698 ha dedicated land (Forestry Commission).

In Caerphilly officers worked with the LAF on an Open Access Management Plan, which provides an assessment of all the sites of open country in the county borough. Using the plan, the Council has been able to identify and carry out works which help provide or improve access, provide landowners with advice and also how best to advise the public on how to use their new rights in a responsible manner when using new areas of accessible land.

As far as rights of way are concerned, there are four classifications in Caerphilly i.e. Restricted byways making up 11% of the network; 656 km of footpaths i.e. 78% of the network; 83km of bridleway - 10% of the network and 12km Byways Open to All Traffic - 1%. A total of 846 km or 526 miles. A brief definition was provided of each.

Reference was made to the work undertaken by the Countryside Section in relation to the management and maintenance of the network, the Definitive Map, public path and modification orders and the implementation of the ROWIP. Details were then received of the various projects undertaken by the three Access Forums since 2002 together with the sources of funding.

The presentation concluded with an outline of the main projects that the section is currently undertaking within the county borough, a slideshow showing improvements to footpaths, bridleways and cycle ways, together with examples of promotional material/interpretation signs and the various walking events that are held.

5. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Norman explained the procedure for the election of a Chair and Deputy Chair. Each member of the Forum was provided with a form on which they could express an interest in becoming Chair or Deputy Chair. Members were requested to return the forms to Norman in the prepaid envelope by 1st February 2012. A secret ballot would take place at the next meeting on 10th February 2012. The result of the ballot would be declared at that meeting.

6. DATES AND VENUES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting was scheduled to take place at 10.00am on Friday, 10th February 2012 at Penallta House, Tredomen. Meetings were normally held on a quarterly basis i.e. in February, May, September and December. Meetings have traditionally been held on Friday mornings, where possible, at Penallta House, with one of the meetings being designated as a site visit.

The Forum's views on dates and venues for future meetings would be sought at the next meeting.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Expense Claim Forms

Norman requested that completed expense claim forms be returned to him in the first instance.

Former Members

It was noted that Mike Johnson (former Chair of the LAF) and Keith Green had decided not to re-apply for appointment to the new LAF. It was agreed that Norman would write to Mike and Keith to thank them both for their commitment and contribution to the work of the Forum over the years.

Map

William Lindsay asked whether it would be possible for a simple map of the county borough, showing the various country parks, towns and villages etc that are frequently referred to at meetings of the Forum to be provided for reference at future meetings. Norman would arrange for this to be produced and if possible, circulated at the next meeting.

Opening of Argoed Bridge

It was noted that the opening of Argoed Bridge was due to take place on 9th February 2012. William Lindsay and Roger Evans indicated that they would like to attend this event on behalf of the Forum.

Norman thanked all those present for attending and for their contributions to the meeting and looked forward to working with both new and former members in the future.

The meeting closed at 11.46 a.m.