



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN PARK, YSTRAD MYNACH ON FRIDAY, 18TH MAY 2012 AT 10.00 A.M.

PRESENT:

Barry Clarke, John R. Davies, Roger Evans, Byron Grubb, Robert Jones, Garry Lewis, William Lindsay, David Parry, Nigel Yates.

Together with:

Phil Griffiths (Principal Planner and Assistant Secretary to the LAF), Andy Powell (ROW & Countryside Access Officer), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Glyn Davies, Andrew Edwards, Elaine Gwynne, Lorraine Howells, Alison Palmer, Maggie Thomas and Norman Liversuch.

It was agreed that a letter would be sent to the former Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning, Councillor Ron Davies, to thank him for his contribution to the Local Access Forum during his term of office.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2012 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute No 4.

In response to a request from Barry Clarke at the last meeting for more accessible expense claim forms, Andy Powell advised that a new template had been prepared and had been sent to Barry for his views. Barry confirmed that he had received the new template and would respond to Andy as soon as possible.

Minute No 5.

Phil Griffiths confirmed that letters had been sent to Mike Johnson and Keith Green on behalf of the Forum thanking them for their contributions over the years. Both had responded thanking the Forum for their sentiments, expressing how much they had enjoyed their involvement with the Local Access Forum and wishing everyone good luck for the future.

Minute No 6.

As the agenda for this meeting was quite full it had been decided that the RDP Team would attend the next meeting to explain the RDP scheme in more detail and the work that is being undertaken.

5. COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES - REVIEW OF OPEN ACCESS LAND

The Forum received a Powerpoint presentation from Chris Heaps, Countryside Council for Wales.

Every ten years the Countryside Council for Wales is required by law to review the maps of open access to mountain, moorland, heath, downland and registered common land, in Wales.

Discussions with landowners and interest groups are an essential part of the mapping review and CCW is working closely with the farming unions, individual landowners and a wide range of user groups to ensure that awareness of the review is high. The aim is to ensure that the process is open and transparent and gives all interested parties the opportunity to review access in their area of interest.

The Forum was advised that the review is progressing well and details of the timetable were confirmed. Draft maps of open country and registered common land will be issued on 16th July 2012 and based on these, landowners and anyone with an interest will be able to make representations. The closing date for representations to CCW is 23rd November 2012. CCW will issue All Wales provisional maps and the deadline for owner/occupiers to appeal decisions to the Planning Inspectorate is 7th November 2013. The appeals process ends on 9th May 2014 and CCW will issue an All Wales conclusive map on 24th September 2014. CCW confirmed that the LAF would be informed of any significant changes to the maps.

The Forum's views on the setting up of a working group to assess the initial maps would be considered later in the meeting, under Any Other Business, in conjunction with an update on progress with the Glastir scheme.

It was agreed that copies of the presentation would be circulated to LAF Members by email.

6. WELSH GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FRAMEWORK

The Forum received a Powerpoint presentation from Luke Maggs, Countryside Council for Wales on the Welsh Government's proposals for a Natural Environment Framework.

Welsh Government has been considering how best to take forward the management of natural resources in Wales. This was the subject of a previous consultation 'A Living Wales' which has now been followed with the green paper 'Sustaining a Living Wales'. Following the 'A Living Wales' consultation and the preparation of a detailed business case, the Environment and Sustainable Development Minister announced a proposal to simplify arrangements for managing the environment in Wales by creating a single body which will bring together the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency Wales and the Forestry Commission Wales. The new body will have a key role in protecting Wales' natural resources, working with businesses in Wales. It will also provide environmental advice and input to planning processes and to the development of new legislation, helping to design new regulatory arrangements, which simplify regulatory processes and encourage investment, whilst maintaining the environment.

Consultation on 'Sustaining a Living Wales' commenced on 30th January 2012 and will close on 31st May 2012. The consultation seeks views on the proposed arrangements for

establishing and directing a new body for the management of Wales' natural resources. The document describes the proposals for the main functions and powers of the body and how it will be governed, including the arrangements for an executive board and wider stakeholder engagement.

The presentation covered the key elements and aims of the new body, the consultation process and timescale and the governance and transitional arrangements. Welsh Government's response set out in the Green Paper is based on the ecosystem approach, which demands that the environment is looked at as a whole, taking into account its relationship to our social and economic needs, health and wellbeing. Developing and implementing an ecosystem approach is a major challenge and would put Wales at the forefront globally on delivering sustainable development. Sustaining a Living Wales brings together a range of measures which, taken together, will enable a more joined up way of working. This includes simplifying institutional arrangements, removing restricting boundaries and enabling simplification of aims, plans and processes. In addition, it will modernise and simplify our regulatory and management framework by bringing forward new legislation on environment and planning.

The Chair thanked Chris and Luke for their very informative presentations and it was agreed that copies of both presentations would be sent to all Members of the Forum.

Members of the Forum were invited to email any further comments they wished to make on the consultation document to Luke Maggs at CCW by 31st May 2012.

7. REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIRS' NATIONAL LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

William Lindsay briefed the Forum on the meeting of the Chairs' National Local Access Forum, which he had recently attended.

The first item raised at the meeting had been the CCW Newsletter. It was noted that copies of the newsletter were no longer circulated at meetings as they are now published on the CCW website. Andy agreed to email everyone when a new edition of the CCW Newsletter becomes available to view online.

The National LAF then received an interesting talk from Gwenda Owen, Chair of Ramblers Cymru, who are looking at partnership working and the sharing of good practice and ideas. They have some funds available and are inviting people to contact them. Discussion took place on the maintenance of the footpath network and the use and training of voluntary groups. Andy advised that he was meeting the local ramblers group in a couple of weeks to talk through these issues.

The next item discussed at the meeting was the All Wales Coastal Path. Whilst it was anticipated that it would have a significant impact on tourism in Wales, concerns had been expressed that the maintenance of the coastal path would absorb most of the funding available for the footpath network. Officers were hopeful that a dedicated budget would be made available for the coastal path.

Reference had also been made to the need for access issues to be included in the remit of the new single body and to the implications of the Highways and Transport Bill, which is still at an early stage.

The final issue that was discussed at the meeting was the theft of gates and stiles in the countryside, an increasing problem, which is causing much concern amongst landowners, particularly when livestock are left free to wander from unenclosed fields.

8. PROJECT UPDATES

Phil Griffiths gave an update on projects being undertaken in the County Borough. The five schemes referred to at the last meeting had now been reduced to four as it was intended that the Rudry car park project would be undertaken via another avenue. Bids for the four remaining schemes, at Pen-y-fan Pond, Parc Cwm Darren, Aberbargoed Special Area of Conservation and Bargoed Country Park had been submitted and the results were awaited. Officers are also working on a joint project brief with Torfaen for the Twmbarlwm area.

In terms of last year's programme, there are three schemes that are not yet quite complete i.e. at Penallta Country Park, Twmbarlwm and Parc Cwm Darren. The schemes, however, are well under way and should all be finished by the end of June this year.

The Forum was advised that HoV funding is coming to an end in terms of these types of projects. There is a VRP contingency fund for this year but the Welsh Government has announced that it will be looking at the whole network in future and to fund more strategic type projects.

9. REPORT ON THE 2012 TWMBARLWM TREK

Andy Powell briefed the Forum on this year's successful event. More than 460 walkers turned up in the sunshine for the challenge to walk 6, 15 or 22 miles around the lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys. The longer walks included a gruelling hike up and over the spectacular Iron Age hillfort of Twmbarlwm and 3 of the highest points in the county i.e. at Twmbarlwm, Mynydd Machen and Mynydd Islwyn.

The Council wished to thank all those who had participated in the event, especially Cwmcarn High School and its Duke of Edinburgh Group, the Caerphilly Adventure Group and St John Ambulance for all their help in making the day such a success.

10. CONSULTATION ON THE CCW ACTIVITY CODES OF CONDUCT FOR ANGLING, CANOEING AND WILD SWIMMING

The Forum was advised that the closing date for comments on the three consultation documents was 1st June 2012. The documents are available on the internet and Members of the Forum were invited to submit their comments to Phil Griffiths or Andy Powell by 29th May 2012 in order that they may feedback to CCW by the deadline.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Working Group

It was noted that consultation had been received from CCW on the proposed changes to Glastir. CCW are looking for LAFs to approve permissive routes and are seeking to target investment in areas of high population and community first areas. Permissive access routes will not be supported by Glastir unless they are specifically suggested by the LAF. This will be an ongoing programme for the Forum and the electronic maps should be received in the next couple of weeks with a revised deadline of late summer for submissions.

Officers proposed that a joint working group be set up to consider this issue and the review of Open Access. As not all Members were present today it was agreed that Phil Griffiths would email everyone asking them to confirm whether or not they wished to participate in the working group.

National Local Access Forum

The next meeting was due to be held on 13th June 2012. Garry Lewis, Deputy Chair, would attend in the Chair's place, along with the Secretary and/or Assistant Secretary.

Countryside Code

This is now on the CCW website and will be officially launched in July at the Royal Welsh Show.

Parc Cwm Darran

The Chair and Deputy Chair would be invited to attend the official launch of the access works at Parc Cwm Darren in July.

Consultation on Highways and Transport Bill

Officers briefed the Forum on the five key points contained within the Bill. Copies of the document would be sent to members of the Forum seeking their views on whether a sub group should be established to discuss the content and response to the consultation process. Consultation on the Bill ends on 14th August 2012 and there is not another scheduled meeting of the LAF until September.

12. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Forum was scheduled to be held on Friday, 14th September 2012. Further details would be circulated in due course.

13. PENALLTA COUNTRY PARK

Members were reminded of the arrangements that had been made for members to view some of the improvements that had been undertaken to the lower part of Penallta Country Park. The walk would take place following this meeting.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting and closed the meeting at 12.05 pm.