



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON FRIDAY,
7TH DECEMBER 2012 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

William Lindsay - Chairman
Garry Lewis - Deputy Chairman

Barry Clarke, Glyn Davies, J.R. Davies, Sylvia Dolbear, Keith Donovan, Roger Evans,
Councillor Ken James, Robert Jones, David Parry, Maggie Thomas.

Together with:

Norman Liversuch (Secretary to the LAF & Manager Countryside & Landscape Services),
Andy Powell (ROW & Countryside Access Officer), June Piper (CROW Support Officer),
Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

Observers:

Sarah Tindal, Countryside Council for Wales.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed Sarah Tindal, Countryside Council for Wales who was attending the meeting as an observer and also Kevin Eadon and Phil Loveless, RDP Development Officers, CCBC, who were attending in respect of agenda item 5.

Apologies for absence had been received from Andrew Edwards, Byron Grubb, Elaine Gwynne, Lorraine Howells, Alison Palmer, Nigel Yates and Phil Griffiths (CCBC).

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2012 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute No. 7 - Project Updates

The Forum was advised that the bid for Tranquil Greener Cleaner grant funding in respect of a landscape study in the Twmbarlwm area and the provision of a small car park adjacent to

Aberbargoed Grasslands had been successful.

A joint brief had been prepared in conjunction with Torfaen CBC for the project at Twmbarlwm and consultants were in the process of being appointed to take it forward.

Minute No. 10 - The Gren Way

William Lindsay and Garry Lewis had a very enjoyable day at the official opening of the Gren Way on 12th October 2012.

Minute 10 - Stray Horses

June Piper, CROW Support Officer, gave an update on this matter. June had made enquiries with Trading Standards and advised the Forum of a Welsh ponies re-homing project that is helping to try and reduce the number of stallions and colts on the land in question. Reference was also made to a Welsh Government initiative, which may also help to improve the situation.

5. PRESENTATION ON THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RDP) FOR CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH

The Chair welcomed Kevin Eadon and Phil Loveless, RDP Development Officers, to the meeting. Following a brief introduction, the Officers gave an update on projects that had been delivered by the RDP Team since the last presentation to the Local Access Forum.

The RDP provides targeted European Union Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Welsh Government funding to identify 'rural' areas throughout Wales. It aims to support and develop the rural economy and its communities, ensuring the sustainable and lasting management of the rural landscape, environment and its resources.

A partnership of public, private, voluntary and community organisations/individuals oversees the RDP in Caerphilly, the Cwm a Mynydd Partnership. Currently CCBC, Policy Unit Countryside, Groundwork Caerphilly, Llamau, Clybiau Plant Cymru deliver 9 projects on behalf of the Cwm a Mynydd Partnership, totalling £3.3m. These projects include grant schemes for communities and businesses; kids clubs; CO2 reduction initiatives; community training, engagement and support schemes.

The presentation covered four main areas i.e. Tourism, Food, Heritage and Timber and Craft. In terms of tourism, details were received of the three main projects that fall within this area i.e. the Wales Valleys Walking Festival; the Caerphilly Challenge and the Caerphilly Tourism Association.

The Wales Valleys Walking Festival offers a wide range of walks for people to enjoy the local countryside whilst keeping fit. The festival started in Rhondda Cynon Taff approximately 10 years ago. Their tourism association invited Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen County Borough Councils to join before extending to Neath Port Talbot. It has been supported over the past 3 years by Heads of the Valleys funding, which has now come to an end. The Caerphilly Challenge has been supported since it commenced two years ago. Its aim is to promote the countryside and attract a new audience to appreciate the Valleys. The Caerphilly Tourism Association based at Tredomen is made up of local tourism businesses that aim to create business opportunities and ultimately increase the number of visitors to the county borough.

The Forum was also made aware of the various projects that are ongoing in terms of local food produce. These include the Pop Up Diner, food workshops, the 5-a-day breakfast and Phillipstown community food co-op 'Cheap as Chips'. On the heritage side, work has been ongoing with the ramblers on 'Etrails' digital walking routes at Trinant and Pentwyn.

Reference was also made to the Common Sense exhibition, which was due to be launched at Llancaiach Fawr in January and at Babell Chapel in March, which had been inspired by Gelligaer and Merthyr common. It was noted that the RDP Team is also working with Countryside on various projects, including one at Babell Chapel.

In terms of Timber and Craft, the Forum was advised that wood that is felled within the county borough is collected and taken to the timber yard in Aberbargoed where it is processed and given to local community groups and enterprises to be turned into park benches etc. Work is also undertaken with local artists to stage local art exhibitions e.g. Art in the Chapel, Common Sense and the Rudry Exhibition.

The Chair thanked Kevin and Phil for their informative presentation and a full discussion took place on the issues raised. The Forum was advised that further information on the work of the RDP Team and the grants available can be found at www.cwmamynydd.co.uk

6. REPORT OF THE LAF CHAIRS' MEETING

The Chair briefed the Forum on the key issues raised at the LAF Chairs' meeting, which he had attended on 4th October 2012.

Reference had been made to the consultation process for the Single Body, which will bring together the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency Wales and the Forestry Commission Wales. Discussion had then taken place on the Glastir scheme and the Chair advised that concerns had been raised in relation to the lack of information from Welsh Government about the scheme. The Forum was reminded that a working group had been set up to identify potential permissive access routes in the county borough approximately 12 months ago. The group had subsequently produced a map, which had been sent to Welsh Government who had added the information onto a base layer. The Chair stated that it was felt amongst Chairs at the meeting that it would have been more beneficial to identify general areas and for Welsh Government to seek the LAFs' views on any applications received. Norman and Andy emphasised that the mapping exercise had been a very worthwhile exercise and that they had very much appreciated the input of all who had been involved. The Authority would make good use of the map that had been produced.

Discussion then ensued on the use of smart technology to enhance the experiences of visitors to Wales. A software application, 'Who's Near Me?', enables the user to track down other attractions and interests in the area and could possibly help to identify visitor numbers to the area, including their likes and dislikes. An update was then received on progress with water-based recreation and in particular the SPLASH grant scheme. The meeting had concluded with reference to the different ways in which LAFs are run.

7. PROMOTED ROUTES

Andy Powell briefed the Forum on the CCW Stakeholder Seminar "Exploring Opportunities for Promoted Routes in Wales" which had been held at the Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells on 3rd October 2012. Andy circulated copies of the transcribed report of the seminar to members of the Forum and sought their views on the definition of a promoted route.

The seminar was hosted by CCW to bring together key stakeholders to explore the potential of a co-operative approach to building Wales' reputation for high quality promoted routes and related outdoor recreation for Wales and its visitors. The day had started with an introduction to CCW's interest in promoted routes followed by discussion of the views of participants on the need for a scope of promoted routes. Small group discussions took place to explore and recommended ways forward on key issues.

In terms of the decisions made and immediate next steps, paragraph 6.1 sets out the points made and clarified in the last session of the day. Norman queried whether the summary paper due from CCW had been sent to the group for comments and further involvement as stated in the Action column of the table. Sarah Tindal, CCW, agreed to pursue this matter.

8. PROJECT UPDATES

Andy Powell provided a brief update on projects in the absence of Phil Griffiths who had tendered his apologies for the meeting.

Andy advised that budgets were tight and external funding was drying up. However, a bid had been submitted for an extra £20k from the HoV underspend this year, which would need to be spent by March 2013. Officers had also targeted the Big Lottery fund for access improvements. Another Big Lottery bid related to training across the county borough for heritage, including landscape access. A bid had also been submitted for apprenticeship places and it was hoped to have 8-10 apprentices, including one to work on rights of way. A more detailed report would be provided for members at the next meeting.

A Member of the Forum sought further information on the cycleway scheme at Hafodrynus in terms of concerns raised with regard to access issues. Norman agreed to investigate this matter and report back to the next meeting.

9. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND OPEN ACCESS

Andy Powell updated the Forum on the current position. A sum of £50,423 had been received from Welsh Government for last year but it was not known how much, if any, would be allocated in the future for the ROWIP. As part of the criteria, at least 40% of the total had to be spent by the end of November 2012 and Andy confirmed that this had been achieved. Projects included a pathway at Aberbargoed grasslands and a bridge at Wernddu Woodlands. A conscious effort was being made this year to change stiles to gates subject to the landowner's agreement. A total of 12 had been replaced to date with a target of 20. Another 7 had been signed up but not yet installed.

In terms of future ROWIP funding, officers were hoping that there would be a further sum allocated by Welsh Government in 2013/2014 although it was expected that this would be less than in previous years. Details of Welsh Government's settlement were due to be announced before Christmas.

The Forum then received an update on the review of Open Access. The sub group, made up of William Lindsay, Maggie Thomas, Glyn Davies, Robert Jones, Phil Griffiths and Andy Powell, had met on 25th October to examine the six maps covering the County Borough, which had been provided by CCW. The following comments had been made by the sub group on the maps and forwarded to CCW's Open Access Team:

C1 - Add area above HoV road north of Blaen Rhymney Farm. The sub-group felt that it meets land shown as OC but consists wholly or predominantly of moorland.

C3 - Area of land near Markham with disused mine shafts. Wished to raise serious H&S risks,.

C4 - Add area to the west of Cwmcarn - wholly or predominantly moorland.

C5 - Possible mapping error with Mynydd Eglwsilan.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- A Member of the Forum sought further information on the off-road motorcycle track in Bedwas. Norman confirmed that the privately run facility had been refused planning permission by the Council and that the Council's decision had been upheld on appeal. Norman was due to meet the Police next week regarding the ongoing issues with off road activities in the county borough.
- Members were reminded to complete and forward their expense claim forms to Norman as soon as possible.

The Chair wished everyone a Happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year. The next meeting of the LAF is scheduled to be held in March 2013. Further details would be sent to Members in due course.

The meeting closed at 12 Noon.