



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT CWMCARN VISITOR CENTRE, CWMCARN ON FRIDAY, 11TH OCTOBER 2013 AT 1.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

William Lindsay - Chairman
Garry Lewis - Deputy Chairman

Glyn Davies, Sylvia Dolbear, Keith Donovan, Roger Evans, Byron Grubb, Elaine Gwynne, Lorraine Howells, Councillor Ken James, Alison Palmer, David Parry, Maggie Thomas, Nigel Yates.

Together with:

Philip Griffiths (Secretary & Principal Planner), Andy Powell (Countryside Access & Rights of Way Officer), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair thanked Officers for arranging the visit to Twmbarlwm, which had taken place earlier in the day and the subsequent quite challenging walk.

Apologies for absence for the meeting had been received from Barry Clarke, J.R. Davies, Andrew Edwards, Robert Jones and Sarah Tindal (Natural Resources Wales).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations at the start of the meeting. However, Lorraine Howells declared an interest under 'Matters Arising' during discussion on the Nant Llesg Open Cast Scheme, Lorraine advised that she owns land included in the scheme.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Ken James advised that the planning application for the Nant Llesg Open Cast Coal Mining scheme had now been received. The application would involve a considerable amount of consultation and a full environmental assessment. It was noted that the Local Access Forum would be consulted formally as part of the application process.

5. REVIEW OF LAF WORKING PRACTICES

Andy Powell informed the Forum that he had recently received a questionnaire from Natural Resources Wales (NRW), which sought the Forum's views on their working practices e.g. how well they think the Forum is run and whether or not anything could be improved. Questions 1-20 sought the views of the Secretary and Questions 20-40 were addressed to the Local Access Forum. Andy presented each question verbally at the meeting and made a note of the responses, which would be collated and forwarded to Natural Resources Wales by the deadline of 30th November 2013.

6. NATURAL RESOURCES WALES ROWIP SURVEY

Andy Powell advised the Forum that the Authority had been asked by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in the summer to undertake a ROWIP survey. NRW commissioned a survey on progress with the implementation of the ROWIP in the different Authorities. Andy had completed the questionnaire on behalf of the Authority and would update the Forum on the outcome when he received further news.

Discussion ensued on the funding that had been made available for the implementation of the ROWIP and Officers expressed disappointment that they had not been able to achieve all that they had wanted to due to insufficient funding.

7. ROWIP UPDATE

Andy advised the Forum of the total funding amounts that had been received from Welsh Government for the ROWIP to date and of the uncertainty of funding availability in the future. The biodiversity project that had to be undertaken this year as part of the criteria was being undertaken at Rudry Common. Work was continuing with volunteers and also, replacing stiles with gates, where appropriate.

8. OPEN ACCESS PROVISIONAL MAP

Andy Powell updated the Forum on the Open Access mapping exercise, which had been undertaken by the sub-group established last year.

Following the consultation period, the provisional map had been produced and the draft stage was published in August. Natural Resources Wales had accepted this Authority's submission relating to a piece of land at Blaen Rhymney and had added it to the provisional map. The second piece of land, in the Bedwellty area, had raised health and safety concerns in relation to previous mining activity. The third representation made by the Authority related to land consisting mainly of woodland and scrub in the Cwmcarn area. This wasn't added to the map as it didn't meet the criteria, neither was the fourth submission relating to a boundary line at Eglwysilan.

The Forum was advised that the deadline for appeals is the end of May 2014 with a view to the conclusive map being published September 2014.

9. HORSE RIDING PROVISION IN THE COUNTY BOROUGH

The Forum was advised that a presentation by Jeanne Hyett, BHS, at a recent LAF Chairs' Conference, highlighted that CCBC was spending more on bridleways than other Authorities. However, Officers had been in discussion for some time with horse riders in particular from the Lower Sirhowy Valley area, in relation to the expenditure on bridleways in the County Borough. In order to progress this matter, it was proposed that a meeting be held, with two

horse-riding representatives from each of the four parts of the county borough to discuss this matter in detail.

10. GRANT AID PROJECTS

Phil Griffiths updated the Forum on progress since the last meeting.

It was reported that the Energlyn Sidings scheme had received funding from Welsh Government. The application for funding for the second phase of the Upper Sirhowy Valley project had been accepted and was currently being assessed. The Twmbarlwm Society had received £20k for improvement and access works.

Two grants that are likely to be available shortly are the Eco System and Green Infrastructure grants. The next phase of the Valleys Regional Park fund is likely to be more urban focussed and applications will be sought on a regional basis. Caerphilly had identified key upland sites across five Local Authorities, which could be managed and used for grazing purposes.

Unfortunately the Authority's application for funding from the Vibrant and Viable initiative for a scheme in North Bargoed had been unsuccessful. Eleven bids were approved, six were rejected and five were put onto a reserve list for a smaller amount of funding.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Access and Recreational White Paper - The Forum would be consulted on the White Paper, which will be issued by the end of the year. There could be significant implications for the Authority as a Highway Authority and landowner. It was proposed that a sub-group of the Forum be established to consider the Paper in detail when it has been issued.
- The Forum was advised that Lucy Swannell is moving to West Wales and Cerys Drew would be the new contact at NRW.
- Members of the Forum were reminded that their completed expense claims should be forwarded to Phil Griffiths, Secretary to the LAF, as soon as possible.
- Members were asked to let Sharon Kauczok (kaucz@caerphilly.gov.uk) know whether they wished to receive electronic copies and/or hard copies of the LAF agenda in future.
- It was agreed that Phil Griffiths would send a letter to Norman Liversuch, on behalf of the Forum, thanking him for his contribution to the morning's site visit.
- In terms of consultation on the Nant Llesg planning application, it was agreed that the Sub Group that had been established last year to examine the proposed compensation sites, would address this matter.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was proposed that the next meeting be held at Penallta House, Tredomen on Thursday, 12th December 2013 at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting closed at 4.10 p.m.