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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Joanne Thomas  
(Tel: 07714600912 Email: [thomaj8@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:thomaj8@caerphilly.gov.uk))

**Date: 17th February 2023**

To whom it may concern,

A digital meeting of the **Caerphilly Local Access Forum** will be held via Microsoft Teams on **Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 at 10.00 am** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda.

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so.

This meeting will be recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. Therefore, the images/audio of those individuals speaking will be publicly available to all via the recording on the Council [website](#).

Yours faithfully,

**PHILLIP GRIFFITHS**  
SECRETARY TO THE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

## A G E N D A

- |   | Pages                             |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | To receive apologies for absence. |  |
| 2 | Declarations of Interest.         |  |

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

A greener place Man gwyrddach



3	Minutes of the Caerphilly Local Access Forum held on 17th June 2022.	1 - 8
4	Matters Arising from the Minutes.	
5	LAF Chairs National Access Meeting - Chairs Report	9 - 16
6	Gwent Green Grid Partnership - Access Development.	17 - 20
7	Rights of Way Updates.	21 - 24
8	National Resources Wales - Forestry Operations and Access.	25 - 28
9	Rights of Way Maintenance Presentation.	
10	Grant Programmes and Implementation.	29 - 32
11	Any Other Business.	

**Circulation:**

Councillor C. Morgan, M. Benjamin, Mr B. Clarke, Mr G. Davies, Mr K. Donovan, Mr A. Edwards, A. Evans, Mrs E. Gwynne, D. Hale, Ms L. Howells, D. Llewellyn, J. Morgan, Mrs A. Palmer, M. Pointon, R. Stones, Ms M. Thomas, W. Williams, A. Wilson and Mr N.D. Yates

Ms S. Tindal (Natural Resources Wales) and Ms C. Deller (Welsh Government)

And Appropriate Officers

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## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

### MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON FRIDAY, 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2022 AT 10.00 A.M.



PRESENT:

M. Benjamin – Chair

B. Clarke, A. Edwards, D. Hale, Councillor C. Morgan - (Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure & Green Spaces), J. Morgan, R. Stones, W. Williams, N. Yates.

By Invitation: B. Campbell, G. Drinkwater and S. Tindall (Natural Resources Wales)

Together with:

P. Griffiths (Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager), S. Denbury (Countryside and Rights of Way Assistant), A. Fleming (Countryside and Rights of Way Officer), D. Jones (Health and Well-being Officer), J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer), A. Afzal (Committee Services Officer).

### RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed for administrative purposes only. Members were advised that voting on decisions would take place via a show of Hands Up.

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from K. Donovan, A. Evans, E. Gwynne, D. Llewelyn, L. Howells, M. Pointon, M. Thomas, A. Wilson.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

#### 3. MINUTES – 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 be approved as a correct record and a show of Hands Up (and in noting there were 7 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Caerphilly Local Access Forum held on 4<sup>th</sup> March

2022 (minute nos. 1 – 10) be approved as a correct record.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

A Local Access Forum Member sought clarification in relation to items 8 and 15 of the minutes. The Member wished to clarify whom the obligation to keep rights of way in a usable condition was aimed at. Mr Phil Griffiths, (Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager), confirmed this was the landowner's obligation. The Member also referred to the meeting requirements going forward with Welsh Government requirements are for Local Access Forum meetings to be held in person. The Member advised this could fall foul of equality as far as people with disabilities are concerned, due to not being able to attend in person. Mr Griffiths advised the Forum that this situation is currently being looked into but in the meantime WG are currently giving flexibility on this section of legislation which states LAFs have a requirement to meet in person. Mr Griffiths advised Members that he is expecting the legislation to be amended but as it is tied in with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act this will take some time. There is also the Local Government Reform Act which states how Councils have to operate and hold their meetings. Mr Griffiths is currently looking to speak with the National Local Access Chair to find out whether this legislation is relevant to the Local Access Forums. Following discussions with other colleagues Mr Griffiths is of the understanding that it isn't and is independent of the Act as the LAF is an independent forum.

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager and the Chair welcomed the new Councillor Mr Chris Morgan. Mr Griffiths advised the Members, the Forum is currently without a Vice-Chair. However, it was not his intention to hold an election to replace the previous Vice-Chair at present and requested consent of the LAF to hold this election at the next meeting.

Mr Griffiths advised the Local Access Forum Members that unfortunately the presentation which had been requested by a Member from Parks has to be deferred to the next meeting due to the Officer not being available to attend this meeting.

Mr Griffiths advised The LAF as per item 12 of the minutes, a further update regarding the cyclist on footpaths could also not take place at his meeting due to the Officer who gave the initial report has now left the Authority. Therefore, this item will need to be deferred.

The Forum thanked the Officer and noted the updates provided.

Following on from the Chairs request to give a background presentation from each LAF Member Mr Barry Clarke gave a brief background into his involvement and interest in being involved in the Local Access Forum. Mr Clarke advised The Local Access Forum his primary involvement is improving the access for disabled people in the countryside making it accessible for all.

The Chair thanked Mr Clarke for his interesting presentation.

#### **5. CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager advised the Local Access Forum Members that there had been a National Forum held on the 19<sup>th</sup> May. Unfortunately, neither the Chair nor Mr Griffiths was able to attend this meeting. Mr Griffiths advised the Forum that he has not yet received any detailed minutes back. The main items on that agenda were the changes to the Local Access Forum Legislation, the maintenance budgets across Wales for general rights of way and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

In relation to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, it was highlighted that the main issues were how few Local Authorities were taking this forward. WG and NRW are looking to having an improvement plan tied into any future grant bid.

## **6. GWENT GREEN GRID**

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager introduced the item and advised the LAF that this is a partnership between four Local Authorities working collaboratively on various environmental schemes one of which will include Access Schemes. It covers a whole range of countryside environmental issues such as biodiversity, environmental developments.

There will be a strategy developed which will be adopted through the whole of the County and there is currently a brief out for the preparation of regional strategy.

The LAF noted there is a Project Team in place which is primarily based in Monmouthshire with the Access Team being based in Torfaen. The lead for the project is Richard Garner. Mr Griffiths suggested asking Mr Garner to join the next meeting to give a presentation and update.

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager requested two Forum Member to volunteer to be part of the Regional Local Access Forum meeting which will be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Councillor Chris Morgan and Mrs June Morgan volunteered to be actively involved in the brief.

The Forum thanked the Officer and noted the updates provided.

## **7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES**

The Chair welcomed Mr D. Jones to the Local Access Forum Meeting.

Mr Jones - (Health and Well-being Co-ordinator), introduced himself and gave the Forum a brief background into his role. Mr Jones advised the Members that the role was part of the Gwent Green Grid Project. Mr Jones will be focusing on facilitating and implementing projects that encourage individuals to become more active within green spaces to improve their health and wellbeing. The Forum was advised Mr Jones will be working on projects around areas which have been designated as having significant health inequalities within Caerphilly. Those areas cover Bargoed, Upper Rhymney Valley and around Risca area.

The Local Access Forum noted one of the projects Mr Jones is involved in within Caerphilly is the delivery of a project John Hole from the Country Parks Team is involved in. The Countryside Service are currently working collaboratively with the Mental Health Board who have a project working with Primary Schools. Which involves taking children to Parc Penallta for nature themed work four times a year. The Mental Health Nurses also do some work around mindfulness and mental health and well-being.

The Chair Thanked Mr Jones. The Local Access Forum noted the update.

## **8. GENERAL RIGHTS OF WAY UPDATE**

Andy Fleming (Countryside and Rights of Way Officer) provided the LAF with an update on recent developments within Countryside and Rights of Way.

The Forum noted that work that is currently a priority for the Countryside and Rights of Way Team is routes to schools, employment areas and community hubs. Since the Local Access Forum met in March, where the Members were informed the Team were currently behind schedule on issues with bridges flooding, due to the extreme weather and COVID Restrictions The Officer was pleased to advise the Members progress has been made and three new wooden bridges have been installed in the Pengam area.

The Countryside Rights of Way Officer also advised the Local Access Forum that as part of the works with Field Fair Trust, when stiles are broken or need replacing the Team work with the landowners to replace them with kissing gates or DDA Gates. However, there are legislative rules that they are required to follow. The Members were assured the Team also work with the landowners where there is damaged furniture on routes to make the routes more efficient for all users.

The Forum thanked the Officer for his update and discussion ensued.

## 9. NATURAL RESOURCES WALES UPDATES

The Local Access Forum also welcomed Ms Geminie Drinkwater (Natural Resources Wales) who provided the Forum with a review of the proposed Rights of Way project at Cwmcarn Scenic Drive. The Forum noted the project was almost complete with only one site requiring completion. Ms Drinkwater explained that NRW are now in the process of adding way marker posts so that Rights of Ways are more visible. Ms Drinkwater informed the LAF the NRW almost ready to submit Modification Orders to Caerphilly County Borough Council.

The Local Access Forum were advised that Mr Campbell had provided a written update for the Forum to note.

The Forum were given an update on the South East Land Management team and noted the new leader is : Rhys Handley [rhys.handley@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:rhys.handley@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk) is now in post and managing the area due to Peter Cloke's retirement at the end of June.

The Local Access forum were also informed in order to contact the LM Team they would be required to use the teams specific NRW e mail address:

[coedwigoeddannaturdeddwyrain@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:coedwigoeddannaturdeddwyrain@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)  
[forestsandnaturesoutheast@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:forestsandnaturesoutheast@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

The Forum noted the following points provided by Mr Campbell;

- Team are caring out normal day to day vegetation and maintenance works in the area.
- Several blocked (or uncleared after felling operations) PRow's have been reported recently in the area and they are being put in to the work program to be cleared as soon as we can get to them.
- The official opening of the Forest Drive at Cwm Carn is planned for the 6<sup>th</sup> July. There is a meeting later today with CCBC and I will pass on relevant info from that.
- The PRow review in the Cwmcarn forest is still underway and recent focus has been on the Cwmcarn North area including Abercarn and also on producing improved walking maps and panels on site at Cwmarn.

- There is new NRW 'No Cycling' signage in production that will be piloted in Cwmcarn forest along with the updated CCBC PRow signage to try and reduce cyclists using footpaths and other promoted walking routes.

Mr Campbell also provided the Forum on and update for Forest Operations which included;

- The Wylie operations have slowed down a touch due to the issues at the contractors end and I will have a better update next week after a site meeting.
- The Wylie the community liaison group is getting together to represent all users of that area to look at the reinstatement and any developments on the site post the forest operations.

The Local Access Forum also welcomed Ms Sarah Tindal (Natural Resources Wales)

The Forum noted there was currently only one live consultation which was the Coal Tip Safety consultation from Welsh Government based on the need to consult on a report published by The Law Commission which recommended a new management regime in coal tip safety. The Forum noted the consultation is open until the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

The Local Access Forum noted an update on the Access Reform where all consultations and reports have been completed and WG are currently considering all the advice and information received from the consultations. There is currently no time scales when this will conclude. However, the WG have recruited two Members of staff who will continue the programme. They will be based at the NRW.

The Forum noted that Juliet Michael is the new Manager of the Land Management Team and The People and Places Team.

The Local Access Forum thanked Ms Drinkwater and Ms Tindal for the update. The update was noted.

## 10. PRIORITY ORDERS

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager reminded the Local Access Forum that in the March meeting a Member of the Forum, Maggie Thomas, wanted to question the Councils order in which they deal with modifications to the Rights of Way Map. Mr Griffiths requested Ms Thomas prepare a report for the June meeting for the LAF could discuss. Ms Thomas has provided Mr Griffiths with this report, it has been distributed to his staff for their consideration and comments. However, unfortunately Ms Thomas has had to give her apologise for this meeting. Therefore, Mr Griffiths requested the item be deferred to the September, when Ms Thomas can present her report.

Although it was agreed that the item be deferred to the September meeting. The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager wanted to make the Forum aware of the main points from Ms Thomas's report which will be discussed in the September meeting.

Following from Mr Griffiths request the Countryside and Rights of Way Assistant outlined the main points from the report. The Forum noted Ms Thomas was querying the number of outstanding applications for adding footpaths to the definitive map under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Mr Denbury advised the Members there are currently 97 outstanding applications. However, there are 96 that have been closed because they do not meet the necessary requirements. The Forum was informed the Team are around halfway through the

applications. The oldest order is dates to 1982. The issues with applications that date back this far is that evidence can be lost by the users who originally applied. The Local Access Forum were advised that in 2014 there was a report submitted to the Rights of Way Cabinet Committee. This outlined how the Officers should be dealing with the applications as they are received, and points given to which ones should take priority. For example, the RoW Cabinet Committee advise where an application is affected by Planning Applications for a site, where develop is proposed and the route could be lost then this would be a high priority.

The Forum thanked the Officer and noted the update.

## **11. ACCESS REFORM PROGRAMME**

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager provided the Local Access Forum with an update on the Access Reform Programme. The Forum was advised the report has been received for the Group One Reform which covers the Review of the Operations of Local Access Forms. This was signed off at the end of March 2022. Mr Griffiths advised the Members that only sixteen of the twenty-two Local Access Forums are in place, and most haven't held a meeting since 2017. This is what the legislation is looking to address. The Forum noted were twelve recommendations put forward in the report, which Mr Griffiths discussed.

The Forum thanked the Officer and noted the update.

## **12. TRANSPORT FOR WALES LEVEL CROSSINGS**

Stefan Denbury (Countryside and Rights of Way Assistant) provided the Forum with an update on the intention to electrify the Rhymney to Cardiff track. The Officer advised the LAF that CCBC are in contact with a consultant for Transport for Wales (TfW) and discussions are taking place with regards to five footpaths that have been identified as high risk beyond an acceptable level to public safety due to the frequency, speed and the reduced sound of the new electric trains.

The Officer provided the Members of the Forum with a Map of the area at Wern Ddu where Members would be taking part in a site visit following the meeting were they would be discussing any possible solutions to the issues that have been raised by TfW.

Members of the Forum confirmed they would be attending the site visit and thanked the Officer and noted the update.

## **13. GRANTS**

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager provided the Local Access Forum with a brief update on Grant developments.

The Forum noted that the access improvement work is still being carried out at the Mynydd Maen site above Cwmcarn.

The Forum noted that funding is currently being sought from a grant called the Shared Prosperity Fund which is a replacement for European Funding. Applications need to be submitted by August. The Council are currently looking at the main priorities. Three of the current top priorities are the continued funding for posts in the Rural Development Programme.



Funding for the works at Cwmcarn Scenic Drive and also to secure funding in relation to the Gwent Green Grid Programme to extend the post of the Health and Well-being Co-ordinator.

The Forum noted WG have agreed a three-year funding for the Access Improvement Grant.

The Forum noted that the Rural Development Programme (RDP) Fund is still being utilised and were pleased to note that Welsh Government has confirmed that further funding will become available.

It was noted by the Forum that Caerphilly has secured a Levelling Up Grant. This will allow further funding for Cwmcarn Scenic Drive. The Forum will be kept informed of the project to turn the area into a tourist hub and there is also a project for a renewed leisure provision at Caerphilly, which the Forum can benefit from.

The Forum thanked the Officer and noted the update.

#### **14. CHALLENGE WALK 2022**

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager provided the Forum with an update and confirmed that the Challenge Walk that was Twmbarlwm Walk 350 people took part and was very Successful.

The Local Access Forum thanked the Officer and noted the update.

#### **15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager advised the Forum Mr Michael Pointon requested the Forum note in his absence his concerns for the wildlife and the decline in many species in Caerphilly. Mr Pointon would like it taken back the National Access Forum Chair that consideration should be given to excluding not only dogs but people to areas at certain times of the year to maintain the countryside and its wildlife.

A Local Access Forum Member advised the LAF The Police Inspector for Blackwood Andrew Boucher has now left. Therefore, new working relationships will need to be formed with the new Inspector. It was noted by the Forum the excellent collaborative work Andrew Boucher was involved within the area.

The Chair thanked all parties present for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 11.54 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

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CHAIR

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## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023

**SUBJECT:** LAF CHAIRS NATIONAL ACCESS MEETING - CHAIRS  
REPORT

**REPORT BY:** MR. MICHAEL BENJAMIN  
CHAIR CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

**LOCATION:** N/A

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Local Access Forum of the discussed items at the National LAF Chairs Access Meeting and provide the date of the next meeting.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The minutes of the above meeting, provided by NRW, are presented for information and discussion. The date of the next meeting is 14<sup>th</sup> March.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To update the LAF on the items discussed at the national LAF Charis meeting

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To update the LAF on national LAF discussions

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The minutes or summary paper of the above meeting are appended. (Appendix 1)
- 5.2 There are 5 principle items of relevance to this LAF to be outlined from the above paper, these being the Sustainable Farming Scheme, working relationships with the Appointing Authorities, the Welsh Government update, the resourcing of Public Rights of Way and the update on outdoor access and recreation.

5.3 The date of the next meeting of the LAF Chairs is 14<sup>th</sup> March and will be held through Teams. It is envisaged that the meeting thereafter will be undertaken in a hybrid manner.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 N/A

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 N/A

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 N/A

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 N/A

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 Consultation with the Secretary of Caerphilly Local Access Forum.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

### **Author:**

Phil Griffiths, Secretary to Caerphilly LAF and Manager of Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries CCBC. (On behalf of the Chair)

### **Consultees:**

M. Benjamin, LAF Chair  
R. Tranter, CCBC, Head of Legal Services  
S. Harris, CCBC, Head of Financial Services  
Cllr. C. Morgan, CCBC, Cabinet Member  
M. Williams, CCBC, Corporate Director for Economy  
R. Hartshorn, CCBC, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services  
C. Harry, CCBC, Chief Executive

# The Chairs of Welsh Local Access Forums

## Appendix 1 Caerphilly LAF 24/02/23

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<b>Title of meeting:</b>	The Chairs of Welsh LAFs Meeting: No 27
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	26/10/2022
<b>Time of meeting:</b>	10:30am – 2:30pm
<b>Location:</b>	MCRA, Plas Dolerw, Milford Road, Newtown, Powys, SY16 2EH

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### Item

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- Chairs welcome and introduction** Ian Mabberley (National LAF Representative & BBNPA Chair)

The Chair welcomed attendees to the first in-person meeting since March 2019. Apologies were noted.

The Meeting Summary of the last meeting had been circulated and were noted. All actions had been completed; Ian Mabberley had written to the Deputy Minister for Climate Change. He had received confirmation of receipt but no response to his letter. In following up on this action, the letter had since been forwarded to Designated Landscapes and Countryside Access, Welsh Government.

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- Sustainable Farming Scheme**; to consider the outline proposals and any representations to be made through online feedback form.

<https://gov.wales/sustainable-farming-scheme-guide>

The opportunity to contribute to the co-design of the Sustainable Farming Scheme was noted. Carys had circulated the information to all LAFs. Some LAFs had already considered the proposals and were considering how to respond. It was advised that the deadline for sending in responses had now been extended to the 21 November 2022. Vincent Mears had been in contact with the SFS co-design team and shared some of the points from this correspondence with the meeting.

The following points were discussed in relation to the current outline proposals:

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- Welcomed the inclusion of options to improve and enhance access within the scheme
  - SFS proposes 10% of land would be for the creation of woodland. It is unclear whether this should be in a block or blocks of trees or random planting
  - Funding for access would be for matters beyond additional legislative requirements
  - Public rights of way are not currently identified as being part of the National Minimum Standards. There was discussion about the principle that existing public rights of way on a farmer's land should be in good order before receiving additional options for improving access
  - There was a need to consider longevity of access and long term maintenance and monitoring of impact needs to be built into the scheme, as well as factoring in for land changing hands. To pay for new paths that are not maintained over a substantial period of time was thought to be a waste of public resources
  - Concern that if any maintenance falls to local authorities that they already have insufficient resource to manage the existing network. Any funding for new paths should come with a requirement for on-going maintenance by the landowner.
  - The need to consider a mechanism for inputting local knowledge to ensure any potential access improvements are useful, reflecting on examples from Tir Gofal and Glastir
  - There is a need to apply standards to access that is created or enhanced e.g. British Standards as a minimum
  - Concern whether there would be sufficient uptake of the scheme
  - There is a need to ensure that any access developed as part of the scheme is publicised so that users are aware of it. In previous schemes lack of awareness of access that had been created was an issue
  - In addition to access enhancements it was important to ensure that public rights of way are identified and protected so that they are not negatively impacted by other scheme interventions
  - Noted that the impact of access improvements would be impacted by the level of funding available

It was agreed that Ian would compile a response on behalf of the LAF Chairs meeting based on the discussion points above.

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LAFs were encouraged to send in their own responses and were welcome to use the points from Chairs discussion.

**Action: Ian Mabberley to submit written response to the online SFS consultation Carys to then circulate this to individual LAFs to inform further responses.**

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**3. Working relationships with appointing authorities** Sharing examples of current working

Attendees shared experiences. There were variations in the relationship between different LAFs and their appointing authorities.

**Discussion points made:**

- The relationship with the appointing authority should acknowledge the contribution LAF members make giving their time and expertise to as volunteers
  - Noted that there can be changes in relationship within the same authority after staff or cabinet changes
  - Whilst LAFs may not be a statutory consultee on TROs, where the LAF has expressed an interest, it is reasonable to expect the authority to consult the LAF for strategic matters and they have discretion to do so
  - Suggestion that having a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the LAF and appointing authority can provide a good formalised basis for engagement. Some LAFs have taken this course of action when there have been problems whilst other LAFs felt they had a good working relationship without the need of an MOU.
  - Noted that the Welsh Government Access Improvement Grant will include a funding condition for 2023-24 to have the ‘the existence of a fully functioning Local Access Forum’, this was welcomed and there followed a discussion about how ‘fully functioning’ would be defined
  - It was noted that all elected council members must sign up to a Code of Conduct, and each authority must have a monitoring officer reporting to an independent Standards Committee. If concerns arise, the monitoring officer should initially be approached informally for advice. (See [The Code of Conduct for members of local authorities in Wales: Guidance from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Revised May 2021](#)).
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- Suggestion that part of LAF member training should include understanding how local authorities work, their standards, planning and conflicts of interest

**Action: Send any examples of LAF/ appointing authority Memorandums of understanding and Carys for circulation to all**

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**4. Welsh Government update** Review and discuss written update

A written update from Sarah Smith, Designated Landscapes and Countryside Access, Welsh Government was circulated in advance and the meeting discussed this.

**Discussion points:**

- Whilst LAFs welcome the funding to authorities through Access Improvement Grant (AIG) there was concern that the administration of the scheme is overly bureaucratic and a suggestion that this should be reviewed so that authorities have more ability to adjust projects within the funding year.

**Action: Graham Taylor to draft letter recommending improvements to AIG for Ian Maberley to issue to Minister**

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**5. Resourcing for public rights of way** Consideration of resourcing levels and any action for LAF Chairs

**Discussion points:**

- General concern about staff resources and revenue funding in local authorities
  - Authorities identifying budget shortfalls in reporting on their ROWIP delivery
  - Noted that some authorities use volunteers to support delivery, this requires supervision and organisation
  - The problem of reduced resources is compounded by the need to seek external funding and in doing so the need to fit in with the external funding priorities, these being for additional rather than maintenance work
  - Noted that there is no longer a consistent performance indicator for rights of way and suggested that there is a need for a better picture of performance to demonstrate the need for more resources. It was suggested that Welsh Government or Natural Resources Wales should do a piece of work to look at expenditure on PROW in different authorities
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- There was concern about deterioration in the condition of public rights of way and for one LAF, a concern about the system to prioritise maintenance of the network based on community council feedback
  - There was suggestion to explore roles for resourcing through community councils
  - Richard Leggett, Carmarthenshire LAF shared the way they report on performance management and offered to circulate this example

**Action: Richard Leggett to pass on information to Carys for circulation to all**

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**6. Outdoor access and recreation** Update from some of the NRW Outdoor Access and Recreation Team's work. Carys Drew, NRW

Carys shared a summary of work in relation to:

- Welsh Government Access Reform Programme – review of NRW work to date contributing to the Programme and work being undertaken this year in relation to Countryside Code and dogs on leads
- Least Restrictive Access work covering guidance, training, piloting and promotion
- Wales Coast Path team working in partnership with social media influencers during it's 10-year anniversary year to engage with new audiences

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**7. Wales Coast Path Review** Opportunity to consider and discuss

It was noted that the Deputy Minister for Climate Change commissioned an independent rapid review of the Wales Coast Path to coincide with the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, this was led by Huw Irranca–Davies MS. The report had been published and is available online [A Review of the Wales Coast Path on its 10th Anniversary \(gov.wales\)](#)

**Discussion points:**

- The need for adequate funding to maintain the route that is well promoted
  - Points around the idea of a tourism levy where visitors come to an area for public access, and examples where this happens elsewhere in the world to reinvest in access infrastructure
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- Impact of climate change in the dynamic coastal environment and the need for maintenance in the face of budget cuts
  - To note the WCP review in writing to the Minister (action above)
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**8. AOB**

Meeting closed.

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## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023

**SUBJECT:** GWENT GREEN GRID PARTNERSHIP – ACCESS  
DEVELOPMENT

**REPORT BY:** MR. PHIL GRIFFITHS/RICHARD GARNER  
REGIONAL ACCESS OFFICER GGG

**LOCATION:** N/A

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Local Access Forum of developments under the access theme of the Gwent Green Grid.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The minutes of the above meeting, provided by NRW, are presented for information . The date of the next meeting is 14<sup>th</sup> March.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The LAF is asked to note the minutes of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership

### 4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To update the LAF on the Gwent Green Grid Partnership

### 5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 There are five primary themes to the Gwent Green Grid, these being, the delivery of green/blue infrastructure projects with an emphasis on health and well-being, improving access to green space through a green corridors strategic access plan, biodiversity improvements with an emphasis on pollinators, tree planting and to deliver regional priorities in a collaborative and sustainable way. This forum, as well as through individuals and represented groups, have input to several of these themes.

- 5.2 Lepus Consultancy have been appointed to prepare a regional access strategy. This strategy will form the basis of the revised Caerphilly Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) which it is intended to prepare and publish during the coming financial year. The LAF will be involved in the production of the revised RoWIP as well as having the opportunity to influence the regional strategy.
- 5.3 Whilst not directly associated with the above, the Caerphilly Active Travel Plan is available to view on line. There are some 400 proposals, set out zonally, spanning a 15 year programme period. Further consultation will be taking place on this.
- 5.4 Mr Richard Garner, the Gwent Green Grid Regional Access Officer will present on the initiative to date. He will set out the potential for further LAF involvement and report on the consultants findings from a meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February, including the identification of the strategic green corridors.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 N/A

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 N/A

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 N/A

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 N/A

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 Consultation with the Secretary of Caerphilly Local Access Forum.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Author:

Phil Griffiths, Secretary to Caerphilly LAF and Manager of Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries CCBC. (On behalf of the Chair)

Consultees:

M. Benjamin, LAF Chair

R. Tranter, CCBC, Head of Legal Services

S. Harris, CCBC, Head of Financial Services

Cllr. C. Morgan, CCBC, Cabinet Member.

M. Williams, CCBC, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment

R. Hartshorn, CCBC, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

C. Harry, CCBC, Chief Executive

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## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023

**SUBJECT:               RIGHTS OF WAY UPDATES**

**REPORT BY:           MR. STEFAN DENBURY  
                              COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ASSISTANT**



### **1.       PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1    To inform the Local Access Forum of developments within the wider aspect of the department.

### **2.       SUMMARY**

- 2.1    Provides an update on the current development of policies and procedures, as well as updates on existing projects and workloads relating to rights of way.

### **3.       RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1    The LAF is asked to note the updates provided

### **4.       REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1    To update the LAF on rights of way related matters.

### **5.       THE REPORT**

#### **5.1.    Policies and procedures being developed.**

- 5.1.1. Under section 66(3) of the Highways Act 1980:-

*‘A highway authority may provide and maintain in a highway maintainable at the public expense by them which consists of a footpath or bridleway, such barriers, rails or fences as they think necessary for the purpose of safeguarding persons using the highway.’*

- 5.1.2. That is to say that if lawful users are endangered by an unlawful use, the authority

can take steps to prevent such an action. Many examples will be familiar to the public and often take the form of bollards or a barrier to prevent motor vehicles driving on a particular path.

- 5.1.3. Following scrutiny of the results of public consultations at two separate sites in 2022, officers concluded that similar responses were being returned and a pattern was forming. These responses were that barriers and gates were not desired generally. In principle, the authority of course agree with this stance, however, the authority also has a duty of care to the users, and if a danger is genuine, and can be prevented by a simple structure, this is a course of action the authority must take.
- 5.1.4. During the original consultations the authority proposed K-barriers (motorcycle barriers) as a method of preventing the undesired use but allowing lawful use. Officers were advised by the results of the consultation that K-barriers were more restrictive to certain lawful users than first considered. Certain wheelchair and mobility vehicles for example were being prevented access completely. The Disabled Ramblers were consulted, and following a short internal consultation with its membership, it was concluded that a kissing gate with a RADAR bypass was less restrictive and therefore the preferred method if a structure were considered essential.
- 5.1.5. Officers concluded that the result of any consultation of this nature could only be one of six options:
  - a) No Structure (if there was no evidential misuse)
  - b) A kissing gate with RADAR bypass (least restrictive option)
  - c) A K-barrier
  - d) A pedestrian kissing gate
  - e) A small pedestrian gate
  - f) A squeeze stile
- 5.1.6. The use of structures should be in this order, and the last four structures would only become options if topographical or physical features prevented the use of a kissing gate with RADAR bypass.
- 5.1.7. The policy proposed is being drafted at present.

## **5.2. Project: NRW signage at Cwmcarn – update.**

- 5.2.1. This matter relates to the signing project being undertaken by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Caerphilly CBC within the Cwmcarn Forest Drive area on Public Rights of Way. At present NRW have installed in the region of 110 waymark posts at junctions of public rights of way, or along public rights of way, where the route may be unclear, such as at junctions with forest roads, or other unrecorded paths. Of those 110 posts, Caerphilly CBC has installed 46 signs, the majority being the new type with grid references incorporated. We have given an undertaking to erect a further 26 signs by the end of February (2023).

## **5.3. Current Claims**

- 5.3.1. Matters in the county continue to involve queries relating to unrecorded rights.
- 5.3.2. Claimed Right of Way 194 / FP127 Caerphilly - Park Lane to Footpath 39 (Tredomen) was sent to PEDW (Planning and Environmental Decisions Wales) for a determination following opposition to the making of the Order in 2019. Due to Covid restrictions, a public Inquiry was not held until September 2022. PEDW determined



the matter, their decision being released on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023 and is an interim decision to confirm the order with modifications. Due to the modifications PEDW deemed it necessary to readvertise and this will occur imminently. It is possible for objections or representations to be made at this stage, and these will be dealt with by the Welsh Ministers or an Inspector.

#### **5.4. Works**

- 5.4.1. A substantial (13 metre long) footbridge on footpath 98 Risca, washed into the River Sirhowy during Storm Dennis has been replaced by a new structure. Associated works to reinstate the footpath connections either end are still underway. The cost of the works including the bridge itself are being covered by the Engineering Projects Group of Caerphilly CBC via a grant from Welsh Government which assists with the costs incurred by the storm.

#### **5.5. Information**

- 5.5.1. Rhondda Cynon Taff have posted notices on social media in relation to restarting their Local Access Forum, and asking residents to submit expressions of interest.

### **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 N/A

### **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 Information Only

### **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The signposts referred to in 5.2.1 have been bought and installed by NRW – there is no financial implication to CCBC in this regard. The signs being attached to these posts have been purchased to cover all public rights of way across NRW land within CCBC at a total cost of £5,124.10. The full costs of the replacement bridge are not yet known.

### **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 N/A

### **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 Consultation with the Chair of Caerphilly Local Access Forum.

### **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Author:

Stefan Denbury, Countryside and Rights of Way Assistant,  
denbus@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees:

M. Benjamin, LAF Chair

Phil Griffiths, Secretary to Caerphilly LAF and Manager of Green Space Strategy and  
Cemeteries CCBC, griffpm@caerphilly.gov.uk

R. Tranter, CCBC, Head of Legal Services

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M. Williams, CCBC, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment

R. Hartshorn, CCBC, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

C. Harry, CCBC, Chief Executive



## Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales

### Caerphilly LAF meeting notes 24/02/23

#### NRW Attendees:

Sarah Tindal (ST) Senior Officer SE People & Places  
Robert Campbell (RC) Senior Officer SE Land Management

#### NRW Apologies:

Geminie Drinkwater (GD) Cwm Carn Forest Drive Project officer

#### Standard NRW update:

##### 1. NRW Actions from the previous meeting (see below):

##### 2. Updates from NRW:

1. **Integrated Engineering:** Forest Road repairs ongoing.

##### 2. SE Land Management:

- a. RC: Ioan Williams is standing in as our Land & Asset Manager while David Letellier is away on secondment for 12 months.
- b. RC: New Biodiversity officer in place for 2 years, Elenor Yoxall, her role is focusing on habitat networks and improving the ancient woodland in SE Wales, especially in the Wye valley where we have important sites such as designated areas and ancient semi-natural woodland. She is working on removing invasive species from these areas and improving the condition of the woodlands.
- c. RC: Normal work program under way, Ash die back clearance is a priority, currently quite a lot of work in Cwm Carn. We are also trying to keep PROW's clear as best we can across the patch. Thanks for the reports of issues, please use out SE Team e mail:

[coedwigoeddannaturdeddwyrain@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk](mailto:coedwigoeddannaturdeddwyrain@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)

[forestsandnaturesoutheast@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:forestsandnaturesoutheast@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

For non 999 (Emergency) urgent or out of hrs incidents / reports use the ICC:

0300 065 3000 (24/7) To enable us to deal with your report as quickly as possible, please provide the following details:

Where is/was the incident taking place? Please provide a grid reference if possible, for example, NT 252 735. Otherwise, you should provide accurate directions / descriptions of the location  
What is/was happening?

Who is/was responsible for the incident?

When did the incident take place?

#### [Natural Resources Wales / Report an incident](#)

Reporting off-road vehicles: [contact@gwent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:contact@gwent.pnn.police.uk) Call 101 @gwentpolice

- RC: Gwent Green Grid we will be working with the partnership ongoing.
- RC: PROW survey work on the NRW estate focused on furniture finished.

- RC: Caerphilly Landscape Project: we are working with them on the project delivery in the respective area and routes.
- GD: All planned reinstatement works of PRoW at Abercarn and Cwmcarn are complete.
- GD: 90% of PRoW waymarker posts are now installed at Abercarn and Cwmcarn.
- GD: Installation of PRoW signs on the posts has started.
- GD: Applications for PRoW route modifications on the WGWE have been drafted. Hope to be in a position to submit to Caerphilly/Torfaen in the coming months.
- GD: Plans are being prepared for a series of interconnecting footpaths and a recreational area on the Medart to link up the various carparks around the Forest Drive. Hope to be able to submit planning application and SuDS application for these by Easter, with a view to some works commencing in the autumn subject to approval.
- GD: Contract issued for the strimming of various non-PRoW routes at Cwmcarn and Abercarn 3 times a year – April, July and September (contract already exists for maintenance of PRoW routes).

### 3. Forest Operations update:

- Relevant FRP's:  
Cwm Carn Forest: The new forest resource plan for the Cwmcarn covers 1911Ha and incorporates 4 previous forest design plan units: Cwmcarn, Sirhwyi/Cwm Felinfach, Machen and Llanbradach.  
  
Link: [Natural Resources Wales / Cwmcarn Forest Resource Plan](#)  
  
The Southern Ebbw FRP covers 974 ha and is made up 11 woodlands located in Caerphilly, Newport, Torfaen, and Cardiff local authority areas, to the north of the M4 motorway.  
  
Link: [Natural Resources Wales / Southern Ebbw Forest Resource Plan](#)
- 2023 Forest Operations program:  
RC: Coupes have been sold in The Darren, West End & Llanbradach however unlikely to start until after the bird nesting season so July / Aug 23.
- RC: Wylie on pause currently due to the downturn in the timber market. No recommencement date currently.
- If you have any issues on our forestry sites, contact the Forest Operations Team on:  
  
[SEForest.operations@naturalresources.wales](mailto:SEForest.operations@naturalresources.wales)

### 4. Reported public Accidents & near misses:

- a. RC: Nil

### 5. Issues:

- b. RC: NRW 2023-34 Budgets being discussed.

### 6. Events/ permissions:

- c. RC: Discuss with the LAF relevance of this information.

### 7. Action points from meetings:



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## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023

**SUBJECT: GRANT PROGRAMMES AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**REPORT BY: MR. PHIL GRIFFITHS**  
**SECRETARY CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

**LOCATION: VARIOUS**



### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Local Access Forum (LAF) of the ongoing programme of grant assisted projects and opportunities for funding associated with access improvements.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Provides an update on secured and possible income streams available to improve and promote access within the County borough. Further to this an update is given on some of the more significant access improvements being undertaken by Countryside and Landscape Services.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The LAF is asked to note the contents of the report

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To update the LAF on grant programmes and their implementation

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The Welsh Government reinstated the Access Improvement Grant three years ago, having withdrawn it a number of years previous to that. The latest round of funding has been allocated on a three year programme, up to March 2025. Previous to this round the funding was awarded on an annual basis and the transition to a three year programme is welcome. Unlike previous awards the current funding has a number of stipulations attached to the allocation, including the need for Local Authorities to have an active Local Access Forum. It should be noted that this funding can include wider

proposals than the statutory rights of way network which is also welcome. The funding allocated to CCBC amounts to some £208,000 over the programme period.

- 5.2 As part of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, which has been previously reported, the Partnership has submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) to the Heritage Lottery Fund under their National Nature Fund programme. This is primarily aimed at biodiversity enhancement at key sites although the promotion of access to and understanding of is a major component. Monmouthshire CC are leading on this with the support of the Partnership. It is anticipated that a decision will be made in March by the funding body as to whether a formal application is requested.
- 5.3 The access improvement works on Mynydd Maen being undertaken as part of the Adventure Triangle project, near completion. These works have improved access across this upland area and created better links to nearby facilities and features including the Cwmcarn Facility and Twmbarlwm. These are of benefit to both residents and visitors, widening the appeal of the area. The works straddle both CCBC and TCBC and have, in part been designed and undertaken with local contractors and interest groups. The land owners of the area have been supportive. The Twmbarlwm Society are keen to attract new members to assist with their on going research and management of the site..
- 5.4 A covid memorial woodland is being established at Ynys Hywel Farm, Cwmfelinfach with the support of Welsh Government funding. An initial phase of tree planting took place last year, supported by community group and volunteer planting. This year the supporting hard works of path creation is programmed which will result in a comprehensive network throughout the project area, linking with both the National Cycle network and wider country park. These works have been tendered.
- 5.5 The route for the annual Caerphilly Challenge event has been determined with the event being focussed on the Caerphilly Basin this year. The date of the walk, which will again make provision for some shorter led walks in addition to the self led long distance event, is in May . The Aneurin Bevan Health Board, along with a range of volunteers will support this event. Bookings are available on line.
- 5.6 The Chair has requested that the membership be made aware of a Sustrans initiative to supply and install wooden benches along cycleways and that any interest be passed to the Secretary. These benches are free but supply and resources are likely to be limited.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 N/A

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 N/A



**8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 N/A

**9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 N/A

**10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 Consultation with the Chair of Caerphilly Local Access Forum.

**11. STATUTORY POWER**

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