



## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,  
YSTRAD MYNACH, 11TH MARCH 2016 AT 10:00 AM

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PRESENT:

William Lindsay - Chair  
Garry Lewis - Vice-Chair

Barry Clarke, Roger Evans, Lorraine Howells, Alison Palmer, Nigel Yates, Ruth Stones

Together with: Officers – Phil Griffiths (Secretary/Principal Planner), Andy Powell (ROW and Countryside Access Officer), Amy Dredge (Committee Services Officer)

Chris Heaps – Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ken James, Michael Benjamin, Andrew Edwards, Sartha Rajoo and June Piper (ROW and Countryside Support Officer).

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

### 3. MINUTES – 11TH DECEMBER 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11th December 2015 were approved as a correct record.

### MATTERS ARISING

#### 4. The Council's Waste Management Strategy – Fly Tipping (Minute No. 6)

Concerns were expressed in relation to fly tipping across the county borough and Members stated the number of cases are increasing.

## **5. RIGHTS OF WAY AND PLANNING GUIDANCE**

Andy Powell reminded Members that at the meeting held in December 2015, the LAF were informed that a meeting had taken place between Tim Stephens Development Control Manager of Caerphilly CBC and some Members of the Forum, the outcome of which was that Andy and Phil would draft a guidance note regarding Development and Public Rights of Way.

Copies of the draft guidance were distributed and Members of the LAF were requested to provide comments by email or phone by the 22nd April 2016.

This guide is intended to provide basic information for developers and designers about the importance of Public Rights of Way (PROW) which may be affected by development. Andy confirmed that more detailed guidance and advice is available from Local Authority Planning and Rights of Way Staff. This guide summarises the statutory provisions and best practice relating to PROW and offers information on how the adverse impacts of development on PROW can be avoided.

The next stage of this process will be to report back to the LAF meeting for approval in June and then to present the document to Tim Stephens for comment and subsequent approval by Senior Officers.

## **6. ALL WALES CHAIRS' CONFERENCE 2016**

William Lindsay (Chair) briefed the Forum on the key issues raised at the recent LAF Chairs' Conference which included a talk from Richard Neil from the National Trust in terms of Access and Recreation.

The next item referred to at the Conference was the proposed LAF National Action Plan (NAP) which is based on workshops held as part of the LAF Conference 2015 that was held in response to the findings of the Report on the *Review of LAF Working Practices*. The themes considered as part of the workshops were Engagement, Publicity, Influence, Work Planning and Membership. Copies of this document were distributed to the Forum.

The Forum was informed of the next steps required by the Chair when reporting back to the LAF and it was suggested that a sub-group of the Forum be set up to consider and discuss the Plan. Roger Evans, Lorraine Howells, Garry Lewis, Ruth Stones and William Lindsay agreed to undertake this task at a future date.

Reference was then made to the Cambrian Way Walk that runs Coast to Coast from Cardiff to Conwy with a distance of 291 miles. There is a guidebook available to purchase in shops and online. The route travels via Caerphilly Ridge, Twmbarlwm and Pontypool. This is a high level walk traversing the highest and wildest parts of Wales on public rights of way or where there is a right of access.

Finally, a discussion took place in relation to LAF working practices and the Chair expressed his views in terms of making more people aware of the LAF's existence and suggested that the Forum could produce a document outlining work undertaken and achievements made over the last 15 years. Phil Griffiths (Secretary) suggested that ideas could be brought to the next meeting in terms of a contents page and confirmed that the cost for producing the document shall be borne by the Local Authority.

## **7. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP) UPDATE AND FUTURE FUNDING.**

Andy Powell advised the Forum that Caerphilly CBC received the grant allocation in the sum of £37,480 for 2015/16. As in previous years Natural Resource Wales (NRW) delivered the funding allocation on behalf of Welsh Government (WG) on the agreed formula. The delivery service by NRW to date has not incurred an admin fee as this element is deducted from the WG fund that provides ROWIP delivery. However, an admin fee may be included if and when future grants are delivered and confirmation of this decision is awaited, as this will mean a slight reduction in each of the Local Authorities contribution.

In terms of funding spent in 2015/2016, Members were informed that 8 projects have been delivered including, a new sleeper bridge at FP 149 Risca, new tools for Rudry Circular Trail Access Volunteers, works on a new footbridge on the Rhymney River Circular Walk, new Fingerposts, (changing from wood to metal), minor improvements to the Machen Forge Trail, Equestrian trails, Surfacing and Handrail community link in Ynysddu and Mobility problems that are County wide.

During the course of discussion, reference was made to the metal fingerposts and Andy confirmed that these would be concreted into the ground and therefore more secure than the materials used previously.

## **8. FUNDING UPDATE**

The Forum received an update in relation to funding from Phil Griffiths. Details were provided in relation to the Torfaen Canal Access leading up to Mynydd Maen and that confirmation should be received by the end of March in terms of this European Bid. A bid has also been made to NRW in respect of Aberbargoed, Habitat Works. The original 17 expressions of interest referred to previously have increased to 24, including access works in Llanileth (with Blaenau Gwent), Sirhowy Country Park and Parc Cwm Darran in relation to improving and extending the Campsite.

The department are awaiting the outcome in relation to core funding. Welsh Government has removed several grants from NRW which are now to be given to Local Authorities, however the figure has reduced from 54K to 51K.

Upcoming projects include Countryside projects from lottery funding and are currently in the bidding process. Caerphilly is one of eight Councils in Wales that have been selected. There are 2 projects including Wernddu Woodland Trust (Development Grant) and Markham Colliery Site, creating water features for Wildlife.

The Rural Development Plan (RDP) funding is due and this relates to Sustainable Land Management with benefits of access and scenery. The Forum was pleased to note that the Rural Development Fund has reopened with twice the funding available than the last round and is looking to support 60 projects across Wales.

## **9. WALKING FOR HEALTH UPDATE AND THE CHALLENGE WALK 2016.**

Phil Griffiths confirmed that as previously agreed he would write to the NHS in relation to the Potential withdrawal of the Walking for Health Projects organised by Brian Begg due to the NHS funding his role. Confirmation has been received that no official decisions have taken place as yet and the walks will continue for the immediate future.

Andy Powell provided an update on the Challenge Walk 2016 that will take place on the 7th May that will start at Bedwas High School and will include walks for all abilities from 5, 10, 17 and 22 miles. 270 entries had been received to date, the most popular with the Ramblers being the 22 mile walk. The Forum were informed that an online booking system

has been introduced this year and another new element is electronic tagging, where entrants will wear wrist bands and can be tagged when reaching the various check points. An update on this event will be provided at the next meeting.

#### **10. OFF ROADING – LANDSCAPE CRIME TOOLKIT**

Phil Griffiths advised the Forum that the South East Wales Uplands Crime Toolkit was prepared for Torfaen County Borough Council on behalf of the SE Wales Uplands Partners comprising Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly County Borough Councils and Gwent Wildlife Trust.

The purpose of the toolkit is to tackle landscape crime. The principle landscape crimes addressed by the toolkit are arson, fly-tipping and illegal off-roading. The project is funded by Welsh Government (WG) and its aim is to improve the resilience of nature and support for the needs of society by promoting joined-up approach, collaborative and area based actions.

It was explained that the partners are trying to co-ordinate ten principles of crime prevention and Phil will provide an updated report in respect of this at the next meeting.

#### **11 LAF TRAINING EVENT**

The Forum was reminded of the Disability Awareness Training event held at Parc Cwm Darran on 26th February. Andy Johnson (former Director of Fieldfare Trust) delivered the course that included training in relation to the Countryside for All – Inclusive Countryside Access. The aims of the training day were set out.

The Forum thanked Andy for organising the training event as they enjoyed the course and found it very helpful and informative.

#### **12. SITE VISIT – 3RD JUNE 2016**

It was suggested that as there are ongoing projects being undertaken in the Borough that Members may wish to access furniture in the countryside along the Machen Forge Trail. The Forum agreed to walk part of the trail and then look at other pieces of furniture within the Caerphilly basin. Further details and times would be confirmed to Members ahead of the site visit.

#### **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no matters raised.

The meeting closed at 12.05 pm.