



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, YSTRAD MYNACH, ON
FRIDAY, 3RD JUNE 2016 AT 10:00AM

PRESENT:

William Lindsay - Chair
Garry Lewis – Vice - Chair

Councillor:

Ken James

Keith Donovan, Roger Evans, Alison Palmer, David Parry, Maggie Thomas, Nigel Yates.

Together with Officers

Phil Griffiths (Secretary/Principal Planner), Andy Powell (ROW and Countryside Access Officer), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), Amy Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Michael Benjamin, Barry Clarke, Glyn Davies, Andrew Edwards, Elaine Gwynne, Chris Heaps (Natural Resources Wales), Lorraine Howells, Sartha Rajoo and Ruth Stones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 11TH MARCH 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11th March 2016 were approved as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Walking for Health Update and the Challenge Walk 2016 – Brian Begg (Minute No.9)

Phil Griffiths informed the Forum that a verbal response had been received from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board in terms of funding Mr Begg's role for organising walks throughout the borough and confirmed that funding has been agreed for a further 2 year period.

5. PUBLICITY FOR LAF

The Chair gave permission for item 7 on the agenda (**Review of LAF Working Practices**) to be brought forward and considered with this item.

Phil Griffiths updated the Forum in relation to publicity and LAF working practices and reminded members that a sub-group was set up at the previous meeting that will consider the following areas that were identified in the Draft National Action Plan at the All Chairs Conference in March 2016:

- Engaging with other organisations - Work with a range of partners and landowners;
- Publicising the LAF and its work;
- Influence - Monitoring and measuring the impact of advice and recommendations;
- Work planning;
- Membership;
- Role and Governance;
- Support available.

The Forum was advised that although there is no obligation to undertake the actions (unless the action relates to existing obligations) LAFs can undertake actions if they feel they would be of benefit to their local circumstances. Unfortunately, the group had not had an opportunity to meet however members confirmed a meeting would be set up in due course.

Consideration was given to how the LAFs role and achievements reached over the last 15 years could be publicised. Members suggested promoting the LAF on line via the Council's Website, producing a newsletter or using the Councils Newline paper. These suggestions will be further considered at the sub-group meeting.

6. RIGHTS OF WAY AND PLANNING DEVELOPMENT

Andy Powell introduced the report and thanked the Forum for their comments received for the first draft of the Guidance Note for Planning Development that will

now be incorporated into the second draft. Examples of the comments received were set out in the report.

Mr Roger Evans volunteered to assist Andy in terms of changing the writing style of the document so that it is presented in 'layman's terms' and is easier to read and understand. The Forum supported this proposal and it is hoped the second draft will be available for the September meeting before being presented to Tim Stephens (Development Control Manager) for further comment. The inclusion of photographs will also be considered in the second draft.

7. LANDSCAPE CRIME TOOLKIT UPDATE

Phil Griffiths updated the Forum in terms of the South East Wales Uplands Toolkit. Its purpose is to tackle landscape crime, the principle crimes addressed are Arson, Fly-Tipping and Off-Roading and details of current reported incidents were provided. Officers representing each of the partners are still working on the draft Toolkit that will be distributed that will provide a series of initiatives to help tackle crime. A further update in relation to its progress will be provided at the next meeting.

8. ACCESS GREEN PAPER UPDATE

Andy Powell updated the Forum in relation to the Access Green Paper. He referred to the recreation consultation summary report produced by Welsh Government (WG) in March 2016 that relates to Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation. The paper drew from the evidence gathered during an earlier review of the Legislative Framework for Access (2014) and encouraged discussion on a sliding scale of potential options, including:

- Reform procedures - making improvements to the administration of current access legislation;
- Remove restrictions - removing some of the restrictions on the range of activities that can take place on rights of way and access land;
- Revise access – extending the definition of access land to include other areas;
- New rights and responsibilities – implementing an entirely new access settlement, which allows much greater use of land for responsible recreation.

A total of 5,796 responses were received to the consultation, including 22 responses to the youth version issued simultaneously with the Green Paper. 165 of these responses arrived after the closing date but the comments have been taken into account.

Details of the responses were set out and it was confirmed that no decisions have been made on whether any changes should be taken forward. The key aim of the consultation was to gather information and views from people about how potential improvements to the legislative system and the responses will help inform decisions by Welsh Government in future.

9. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

Phil Griffiths gave an overview of the Act that came in to force on the 1st April 2016 that relates to improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It will make the 44 public bodies (including the 4 statutory bodies - Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, Fire and Rescue Service and Natural Resources Wales) listed in the Act think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive Communities
- A Wales of vibrant and thriving Welsh Language
- A globally responsible Wales

It was explained that Wales faces a number of challenges now and in the future, such as climate change, poverty, health inequalities and jobs and growth. To tackle these we need to work together and each public body must carry out sustainable development. The Act puts in place a 'sustainable development principle' which tells Organisations how to go about meeting their duty under the Act. The body must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In concluding, Phil stated that the impact of the Act could provide an opportunity for the LAF to become involved in terms of strategies going forward and the Council will learn more as the Act 'beds in'.

10. ROWIP FUNDING UPDATE

Andy Powell advised the Forum that Caerphilly County Borough Council has been granted funding to implement its ROWIP for 2016/17. The amount of £37,480 has been received and is the same figure received as last year. He stated that given the current economic climate, the Authority are very pleased to secure the same amount of funding to help carry out projects this year. The Forum was pleased to note that despite rumours that NRW were due to receive an administrative fee for processing the funding on behalf of Welsh Government (WG), this fee had not been applied. Details of the works and spend allocation will be provided at the next meeting in September.

The WG published its first draft advice in May 2016 in relation to 'A Review of Rights of Way Improvement Plans - Guidance to Local Highway Authorities in Wales'. The

lengthy document sets out guidance for reviewing and preparing the next ROWIP which is a 10 year plan that will be reviewed as of 2017/18 in Caerphilly. An update in relation to consideration of the guidance will be provided at the next meeting.

11. FUNDING UPDATE

The Forum received an update in relation to current funding bids from Phil Griffiths. He confirmed that feedback received in relation to the Rural Development Plan (RDP) applications is to resubmit bids for the second round. Details of some of the project bids were set out including Granny's Wood (in conjunction with Blaenau Gwent Council), Changing Landscapes (Improving Country Parks) and Markham Wetlands (Former Colliery Site). A further update in relation to the projects will be provided at the next meeting.

Phil informed members that Community Groups can apply directly to the RDP for 80 percent of funding for projects, however, the Groups themselves will be required to contribute the remainder 20 percent.

12. WALKING FOR HEALTH PROJECT

As previously stated Phil Griffiths confirmed that funding has been verbally agreed by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board for a further 2 year period for the continuation of the organised walks throughout the borough arranged by Brian Begg (Exercise Specialist).

13. WALK EVENTS

Andy Powell advised the Forum that Caerphilly held a successful Challenge Walk Event on the 7th May 2016 that started at Bedwas High School. Over 500 walkers of different abilities participated. The walks were both led and self-led and ranged from 2 - 22 miles.

Much appreciation was expressed in terms of the assistance received from volunteers involved on the day including Caerphilly, Islwyn and Gelligaer Ramblers, Caerphilly Adventure Group and the many sponsors involved. The number of entrants has increased year on year and the Countryside Team are pleased with the introduction to branding the 'Caerphilly Challenge Series', stand-alone website, offering an online booking system. The electronic tagging system used this year has also proved successful and good feedback and comments have been received in response to the day. It is anticipated that next year's walk will be held in the Rhymney area and further details will be made available at a future meeting. Further information is available at www.caerphillychallengeseries.co.uk.

14. VOLUNTEERS

Andy Powell confirmed there is currently a core number of volunteers available and the Countryside Team are looking to develop the volunteer network. The types of activities involved are surveying the network, path maintenance e.g., seasonal cut back, installing furniture and administrative work. It is anticipated that the ROWIP Review will put an increased demand on resources within the team and there may be elements where volunteers could assist. The Forum was asked to relay the request

for volunteers to their representative groups and to contact the team directly with any expressions of interest.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Forum's attention was drawn to current tree felling in the Sirhowy Park area and that toxic blue-green algae has been discovered at Pen-y-Fan Pond, Croespenmaen, Oakdale. The public have been warned to stay away from the water as this can cause stomach upsets and skin problems in humans and is potentially fatal to animals.

Clarification was sought in relation to the terms of reference for the LAF and it was agreed that the document will be distributed to members prior to the next meeting.

The Forum was reminded that annual refresher training will be held at 9:30am on Friday 9th September, immediately before the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm.