



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
YSTRAD MYNACH, ON FRIDAY 10TH MARCH 2017 AT 10:00AM

PRESENT:

William Lindsay - Chair
Garry Lewis - Vice-Chair

Michael Benjamin, Lorraine Howells, David Parry, Ruth Stones, Maggie Thomas, Nigel Yates.

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

Chris Heaps – Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ken James, Barry Clarke, Glyn Davies, Keith Donovan, Andrew Edwards, Roger Evans, Elaine Gwynne, Alison Palmer, Sartha Rajoo.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 9TH DECEMBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th December 2016 were approved as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Development and Public Rights of Way – Agenda Item 5

Andy Powell advised the Forum that there had been a slight delay in finalising the Development and Public Rights of Way document due to legislative changes and this was finally signed off in January 2017. Technicians are currently designing the 'glossy' document and upon completion a copy will be made placed on the Council's website. Every applicant and developer will be made aware of the document as part of the planning application process.

5. PRESENTATION ON THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

Paul Cooke delivered a presentation in relation to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Forum viewed a short animation produced by Welsh Government that explains the positive impact the Act will have throughout a child's life and sets out more about what we do and why.

It was explained that the Act will make the public bodies 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. The Act requires us to work to improve cultural, environmental, social and economic wellbeing by taking action in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle. This includes planning and acting for the long term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention. This is aimed at achieving the 7 Wellbeing Goals:

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

The Act also establishes Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales that replaces former Local Service Boards. Mr Cooke confirmed that the PSB meet regularly to work on the plan and has a duty to collaborate to contribute to the Well-being Goals. The 6 priorities agreed for response analysis by the PSB including the timetable of publishing the Local Assessment of Well-being and Well-being Plan were set out.

Mr Cooke suggested it would be helpful for his team to become involved with the LAF. This would enable the LAF to put their views forward and receive updates from the PSB via his team.

Reference was made to the benefit of connective working and the example of Brian Begg's Healthy Walks (funded by Caerphilly County Borough Council and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board) was discussed.

The Chair thanked Mr Cooke for his informative presentation and confirmed the LAF would be keen to become involved and suggested setting up a sub-group to liaise with the Policy Team. Mr Cooke confirmed a colleague within his team would contact the LAF to arrange a provisional meeting for late March/early April. He confirmed that the objectives will be agreed by June and that Officer's within his team will be allocated to the six objectives next week to collect data.

6. REPORT ON LAF CHAIRS CONFERENCE

William Lindsay (Chair) provided Members with an overview of the LAF Chair's Conference he attended in October 2016. The Conference was chaired by John Morgan, who has replaced the previous Chair, Jean Rosenfeld.

The Chair confirmed that National Resources Wales (NRW) are busy implementing their Corporate Plan. NRW are working on glitches on their website as the mapping facility is currently unavailable for Countryside and Rights of Way.

An update was provided by the Open Spaces Society in terms of the range of bodies who are involved in protecting the Commons in that 8.5 percent of land in Wales is Common Land. Emphasis was placed on LAF's getting involved with this. The Chairs feel it is important to promote the health and wellbeing via the LAF and for them to produce a wish list with 'smart objectives'. Mr Morgan suggested that LAF Chairs deliver a presentation to Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and or the Chief Executive within their respective Authorities. However, Mr Lindsay emphasised that all Chairs are volunteers and most of whom are employed on a full time basis.

7. CITY DEAL

Phil Griffiths advised the Forum of the establishment of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCR City Deal) that was endorsed by Council on the 31st January 2017. The City Deal comprises of ten local authorities: Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan. It is the largest city-region in Wales. This is a £1.28 billion programme of economic growth across the region through the 20 year Deal. This will deliver a range of programmes which will increase connectivity, improve physical and digital infrastructure, as well as regional business governance across the region. He confirmed the consultation document had not addressed green issues. There are three areas that are mandatory for the Local Authority in terms of regional working namely Economic Development, Transport and Land Use Planning.

Reference was made to Welsh Government setting up a task force to improve prosperity in the South Wales valleys that will build upon work previously undertaken in a more coordinated and targeted way which will meet the needs of valleys communities. The group will consist of expert advisors to develop a fresh approach to delivering real change in the valleys.

8. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP) UPDATE

Andy Powell updated the Forum in terms of funding received for the implementation of Caerphilly Rights Of Way Improvement Plan, amounting to £37,400. The full allowance has been spent and the final claim was submitted to Natural Resource Wales (NRW) who will administer the fund on behalf of Welsh Government.

He referred to projects that have been undertaken during 2016/17 that included linking into the Walking for Health Improvement agenda through closer working with Brian Begg (Exercise Specialist). Vehicle inhibitors have been installed to try and prevent the misuse of the network. Bridleway improvements have also been undertaken and promotional material has been produced. Works on the Raven Walk, the continuation of access improvements for those with mobility problems through surfacing projects and working with landowners in changing stiles for gates has also been completed.

The Forum was advised that correspondence has been received from NRW indicating that £1 million has been tabled for formal agreement by the Cabinet Secretary and funding is therefore not guaranteed at this time. Officers are hopeful that this will be signed and sealed soon and be in a position to update the Forum at the meeting in June. It is anticipated subject to agreement that this would equate to around £36k for Caerphilly which is on par with the amount received in previous years.

In terms of the future, the ROWIP team will be meeting to consider how best to progress this area of work. Caerphilly County Borough Council will shortly be undertaking a review of its Rights of Way Improvement Plan. It was explained that the new ROWIP will include a Statement of Action, outlining the Council's broad, strategic commitments towards meeting the needs of the public for access to the countryside. An overview of the requirements of the process was set out and it was confirmed that the LAF will be consulted at each stage.

9. FUNDING UPDATE

Phil Griffiths updated the Forum in terms of funding and confirmed there were 2 bids have been submitted for Sustainable Management Scheme funding under the Rural Development Programme. The Caerphilly Landscape Project, amounting to some £360,000 has been approved and is progressing to stage 2. Unfortunately a bid for Gelligaer and Merthyr Common was unsuccessful despite some positive feedback. It is hoped that this project can still be taken forward through other means. A joint Uplands project, being led by Torfaen but including Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly has also been approved to progress to stage 2.

Phil advised that Caerphilly are currently in negotiations for funding relating to Mynydd Maen (Caerphilly and Torfaen) that will amount to £400K. There are a number of other projects being considered relating to the Rural Development Fund, in particular Access to Water in Penallta Park (£147k), Rail to Trail (£45K) and Improving interpretation in the Country Parks (£140k). There are other funding bids progressing that would improve recreation and health.

In terms of core funding Phil confirmed that cuts have been made by 16 to 17 percent and it is hoped this reduction will be made up in other areas.

10. ACCESS GREEN PAPER

Andy Powell provided Members with an overview of a recent statement regarding Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Recreation, by Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs. The Welsh Government undertook a consultation in 2015 in relation to this area. The consultation paper examined the current legislative framework for access to the outdoors. This encouraged discussion on a sliding scale of potential options, including making improvements and removing some of the restrictions in place under current access legislation. It also extended the definition of access land to include other areas and implementing a new legislative framework.

Almost 5800 responses to the consultation were received and a further consultation will be undertaken on proposals for making improvements in three key areas:

- Achieving consistency in the opportunities available for participation in different activities and how activities are restricted and regulated;
- Simplifying and harmonising procedures for designating and recording public access;
- Improving existing advisory forums and how access rights and responsibilities are communicated to all interests.

A fit for purpose model for Wales would support the achievement of several key commitments set out in taking Wales forward. This will include reducing sedentary lifestyles, promote green growth and develop a 'Made in Wales' approach reflecting Welsh needs and aspirations. It would also help to fulfil statutory obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Active Travel Act.

In concluding, Andy advised there is no time limit indicated within the proposed consultation.

11. WALK EVENT

Andy Powell advised the Forum that this year's walk event will take place on Saturday 6th May. The 'Wild Boar 2017' will be held at Rhymney High School with the routes taking in the Darran, Rhymney and Sirhowy Valleys. He was pleased to note that the event will again be held in conjunction with Caerphilly Action Group, Islwyn and Caerphilly Ramblers and other partners. The options are 1-5 mile (entries on the day), 11 mile route (led), 14 mile route self-led and led and 22 mile route self-led and led.

Andy advised that over 200 walkers have already entered and further information on how to enter and the routes involved are available on the Caerphilly Challenge Series Website at your.caerphilly.gov.uk/caerphillychallengeseries.

12. ENDURANCE RIDE

Phil Griffiths advised the Forum that Endurance Rides have been scheduled at Mynydd Y Grug in Caerphilly on the 15th and 16th April (organised by Endurance GB, De Cymru Group). Day 1 will cover a distance of 10 to 40 kilometres (30 riders) and Day 2 will cover a distance of up to 80 kilometres (70 riders).

13. SITE VISIT FOR JUNE MEETING

Phil Griffiths proposed the venue for this year's site visit at Parc Penallta in Ystrad Mynach, for the afternoon of the meeting in June. The Parc hosts many events and is used by cyclists, walkers, fishermen and more. This location offers different types of access and this would be useful for the Forum to view. Members agreed to this proposal.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Phil Griffiths advised the Forum that Councillor Ken James (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development) would be standing down at the Council election in May. The Forum supported Phil in thanking Councillor James for his help and support provided to the Local Access Forum over the years and wished him well in the future.

Phil informed Members that there are fundamental changes to the Rights of Way Team in that this would be Andy's last meeting as he is leaving the Authority at the end of April and June Piper will be retiring in June. This will mean that the team will be losing 50 percent of its staff. Andy expressed his personal thanks to the Forum for the support received since employed in 2002 and confirmed this was the most enjoyable part of the job. He referred to the achievements reached over the years that have made a difference and asked the Forum to get behind Phil in moving forward. Members in turn thanked Andy for his contribution and support and wished him well for the future.

The meeting closed at 12.15 pm.