



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
YSTRAD MYNACH, ON FRIDAY 8TH JUNE 2018 AT 10:00

PRESENT:

William Lindsay – Chair

Councillor Nigel George (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services) - Vice-Chair

Councillor Walter Williams, Barry Clarke, Keith Donovan, Andrew Edwards, Roger Evans, Alison Palmer, Ruth Stones, Maggie Thomas and Nigel Yates.

Together with: Officers – Phil Griffiths (Secretary/Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager), Andy Fleming (ROW and Countryside Access Officer), Owen Ashton (Rural Development Programme Manager) and Kim Houghton (Committee Services Officer)

Sarah Tindall – Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Michael Benjamin, Glyn Davies, Elaine Gwynne and Lorraine Howells

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 9TH MARCH 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9th March 2018 were approved as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Agenda Item 7 – Rights of Way Funding

P. Griffiths confirmed that the ROWIP funding (approximately £36,000 pa) has been officially withdrawn.

Agenda Item 8 – Funding Update

Clarification was sort on the referenced 'SMS' projects. SMS stands for Sustainable Management Scheme. This is a funding stream to support the Rural Development Plan.

Agenda Item 12 – Countryside Access Management System Mobile

M. Thomas requested that a future item be placed on the Agenda for the LAF to receive further detail on the CAMS system so that they can better respond to enquiries from service users. A. Fleming will provide a brief outline of CAMS at item 8 of this Agenda however he will prepare a more detail explanation to present at the next appropriate LAF.

Agenda Item 13 – Off Road Vehicles Meeting

In reference to the multi-agency meeting formed to reduce/prevent 'off roading' and misuse of commons, there is yet to be a date confirmed for the next meeting. A Fleming will continue to seek a date from the meeting organisers.

Agenda Item 14 – Any Other Business - Chris Heaps (Natural Resources Wales)

The Chairman confirmed he will write to Chris Heaps (former representative for NRW), thanking him for his valued contribution and support over the years and wishing him well in his future endeavours.

5. ACCESS CEFN BRITHDIR

O. Ashton delivered a presentation briefly outlining the purpose of the Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme which aims to work in partnership with local business' and community groups to deliver innovative projects.

He also also informed the Forum of the proposed measures being put in place on Gelligaer and Merthyr common to reduce and prevent the high level of fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour taking place there as part of the project and sought the Forum's endorsement of the scheme.

It is proposed that a Public Space Protection Order will be introduced on the Cefn Brithdir ridge of the Common, with barriers installed at the northern and southern entrance to the highway crossing Cefn Brithdir. The effect of the Order will be to restrict vehicle access on to Cefn Brithdir with the aim of reducing fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour in the area. The high incidence of this is having a detrimental effect on the environment and enjoyment of this area. The proposals have been formed in consultation with relevant user groups including the Gelligaer and Merthyr Commoners Association and local residents.

The LAF discussed this proposal at length with concerns raised in regard to the following;

- By reducing opportunities to fly-tip on the common, this may result in the displacement of the issue to other areas. Although there may be some

displacement, the areas most likely to be impacted are smaller and easier to access by cleansing teams. It is anticipated that this impact will be minimal.

- By Restricting access to Cefn Brithdir may inadvertently impact on legal user access i.e. those with restricted mobility wanting to bring their vehicles onto the common. The forum was informed that keys will be provided to essential users such as commoners accessing stock, emergency service vehicles and council teams. Frequent users of the area who do have mobility restrictions will be able to request a key to open the barrier. There will be a contact number posted on the gates, to contact and request access but this won't be available 24 hours a day.

The Forum discussed the potential alternative measures that could be taken this included the suggestion of installing CCTV however legislation is very restricted on this and installation of cameras would be difficult and inappropriate considering the extent of fly-tipping across such a large landscape.

The installation of the gates will be trialled for 3 years followed by a review of the effectiveness of this measure and the viability of continuing with this approach.

The Forum endorsed the proposal

6. CAERPHELLY LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

O. Ashton delivered a presentation to the forum (see Appendix 1 to the minutes) on the Caerphilly Landscape Partnership. This is a project funded through the Welsh Government to work with a range of stakeholders to increase the use of the landscape and its management in a sustainable way in line with Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

This project involves a high level of stakeholder engagement and a number of community events have taken place to gauge community usage and aspirations in terms of access. A consultant has been appointed to also engage with the community particularly in the area of Lansbury Park in Caerphilly. Consultation events in the form of workshops will be promoted and advertised through social media.

The information gathered through the engagement exercises will be fed into a masterplan going forward. The draft of which will come to LAF for comment however LAF members were asked to express their interest, to the chair, in attending any of the consultation events and masterplan meetings. A. Palmer offered to encourage third sector networks to get involved and support this project.

7. CHAIRS REPORT FROM LAF CHAIRS MEETING

The Chair updated the Forum on matters discussed at the LAF Chairs meeting. Catrin Deller (WG) briefly updated the Chairs on the initial results of the WG consultations on access. Views were polarised with the cyclist lobby weighing in heavily. It was stressed that LAFs should be given equal weight to that given to other interest groups.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have undergone an internal restructuring to continue to support its large remit. This will impact on NRW support of LAFs resulting in there being no guarantee that a NRW representative will attend meetings. NRW's

role has been as observers at LAF but there is work to be done on the relationship between the two. S. Tindal (NRW) clarified this by providing the Forum with an explanation of the restructuring process. NRW do not want to be seen to lead LAFs and will take direction from the LAF as to the extent of their involvement.

The Chairs discussed the future amalgamation of LAFs with concerns raised regarding how this will be instigated, membership management over large areas and forming joint service agreements across Authorities. It was agreed that timing for this needs to be appropriate and the Chairs await guidance from WG.

An issue with viewing permissive paths online was highlighted. Although they are on the access maps online, they are difficult to access.

8. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP) – UPDATE

A. Fleming advised that the consultation questionnaire will be finalised by the end of June 2018. Once finalised, the survey will be passed to the Chair and the LAF for comment prior to launch. The data from this consultation will help to inform the ROWIP. Any further updates on the progress of the survey will be sent via the Chair due to the frequency of LAF meetings.

He also provided the Forum with a brief overview of CAMS. Members of the public report issues, on the ROW network, on a public facing version of CAMS. This is assigned a job number (which the public are given as a reference) and job sheet which can be seen by ROW Officers. Each report is addressed in the order in which it is reported unless it is a matter of health and safety and requires immediate action. A more detailed explanation of CAMS will be given at the next appropriate meeting.

Concerns were raised that the job ordering system may lead to some advertised walking routes to not be prioritised and therefore have a negative effect on tourism if network users find these paths unusable.

Following on from the CAMS overview, the Forum discussed whether a facility could be introduced to the CAMS process which would allow for customer feedback. It was stated that this can be looked at but would be a matter of what resources were available to support this. The maintenance operational model is currently under review with the aim to bring more work 'in-house' and so this may impact on how CAMS is used including any scope for a customer feedback facility.

9. FUNDING UPDATE

P Griffiths updated the forum on funding. The current focus is on where the funding is being spent. There are no new grant applications and none in the foreseeable future. There is a current application submitted to WG for increased funding. WG has come back with a number of clarification questions however it is not anticipated that these will cause any issue in receiving the funding.

A discussion was held regarding core funding. NRW used to provide grants to carry out core duties however this stream is now being provided by a different organisation that covers a number of areas including ROW. This is a supplementary grant, for core duties, to that of central government funding.

10. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

P. Griffiths provided an update on the Green Infrastructure Strategy. This is similar to the Countryside Strategy but is a refresh with a wider scope. This strategy will take in both rural and urban considerations. The strategy is for a 10-120 year time period and will have an integrated action plan covering the next 3 years.

Funding support will be received from Welsh Government however this ends in September 2018 - the aim is to deliver the strategy document by then. TACP have been appointed as external consultants to oversee and review the strategic direction whilst it is being formed. Their scope will include engaging with environmental interest groups, briefing Members and working with the Public Service Board.

Due to the September delivery of the strategy document, a draft will not come to LAF for consideration. It was explained this is a core Council document with as much weight as the Local Development Plan so the consultants will formally extend an invitation to the Chair, for LAF members to attend consultation meetings if they so wish.

11. 2018 WALKING EVENT

A. Fleming updated the Forum on the Caerphilly Challenge Series 2018: The Twmbarlwn Trek which took place on 12th May 2018. 496 entrants took part and the event was sponsored by Nikwax. Feedback from participants was positive with many stating that they would attend the event next year. It was noted that these events were valuable to promoting the use of the network.

The Forum was informed that funding for the self-led walking guidebooks was sourced from the now withdrawn ROWIP grant. Alternative funding streams are being explored so that the production of these guides can continue. Walks are arranged by Brian Begg (Healthy Walks)

A. Fleming thanked the Countryside ROW team and Brian Begg for their hard work in organising and running the successful event.

12. TO ARRANGE A VENUE FOR THE SITE VISIT FOLLOWING SEPTEMBER'S MEETING

P Griffiths proposed a site visit to Sirhowy Country Park. This site has a number of issues and areas of interest relevant to the LAF. This includes forestry works on its edge, a landslip and it forms part of the national cycle network.

This was supported by the LAF. Further details will follow closer to the date.

13. OFFICE RELOCATION

Countryside and Landscape Services have relocated to offices in Bargoed. The new location is as follows;

Countryside and Landscape Services
Ty Bargoed

1 St Gwladys Way
Bargoed
CF81 8AB

Access to the building is to the rear and the team are happy to meet with LAF Members either at the Bargoed office or if provided with enough notice, at Penallta House. Officer emails and contact numbers have remained the same.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

P. Griffiths advised that the Countryside website is currently not fully functional as it is being redeveloped. It will be relaunched shortly.

The meeting closed at 12.21