



CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM 28TH JULY 2023

SUBJECT: GRANT PROGRAMMES, PROJECTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

REPORT BY: REPORT BY CORPORATE DIRECTOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

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5.1 The Welsh Government reinstated the Access Improvement Grant three years ago, having withdrawn it a number of years previous to that.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. Having completed the first year officers are in discussion with Welsh Government and finalising proposals for the coming years.

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. It is pleasing to report that this application has been successful and the partners are awaiting permission to commence. Whilst largely focussed on key bio diversity sites, notably Sites of Special Scientific Interest, improvements within 2km of these are eligible for funding and as such access routes eg The Rhymney Riverside Walk could benefit. A county ecologist will be invited to a future LAF meeting to outline some potential projects but the membership may wish to identify projects themselves for consideration.

- 5.3 The access improvement works on Mynydd Maen being undertaken as part of the Adventure Triangle project have been completed. 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 remain keen to attract new members to assist with their on going research and management of the site, including trials to repair 'deep' fire damage.
- 5.4 A covid memorial woodland is being established at Ynys Hywel Farm, Cwmfelinfach with the support of Welsh Government funding. Two phases of tree planting have now been undertaken, strongly supported by community group and volunteer planting. This year the supporting hard works of path creation have been undertaken which has resulted in a comprehensive network throughout the project area, linking with both the National Cycle network and wider country park. JS Lee have undertaken the contractual element of the works and further phases of planting should be taken in coming years. Should the membership wish to have their 'annual site visit' this year, the Ynys Hywel Covid Memorial Woodland could be an appropriate site for consideration.
- 5.5 At Penallta Country Park the boardwalk accessing one of the wetland areas has been completed. This is a popular facility for educational visits as it allows access into the reeds and over water allowing visitors to see species and ecosystems which are normally hidden from view. The second project at Penallta aiming to widen appeal is the erection of four climbing rocks. These are not open for public use yet as final checks have not been undertaken at the time of writing. These projects were largely grant funded and involved in excess of £200,000 expenditure.
- 5.6 The annual Caerphilly Challenge event was held in the Caerphilly Basin on 29th April and proved to be one of the better attended events held over recent years. Nearly 500 participants took part in the longer distance walks which were supplemented by a shorter 5 mile walk. Luckily the weather was kind, the views outstanding from both the Caerphilly and Mynydd Machen ridges and feedback from participants very positive. The event attracts walkers from well beyond south Wales and an added benefit was the proximity of the Caerphilly Food Festival. Next year the event is likely to revert to early May and be held in the upper Rhymney Valley. The Aneurin Bevan Health Board, along with a range of volunteers helped support this event.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 There are no assumptions associated with this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications directly associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 This report was circulated to the consultees listed below. All comments received have been reflected in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Author:

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Consultees:

M. Benjamin, LAF Chair

R. Tranter, CCBC, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

S. Harris, CCBC, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer

Cllr. C.Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces and LAF Vice

ChairM. Williams, CCBC, Director for Economy and Environment

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