



## **CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH, ON  
FRIDAY 29TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 9.30 A.M.**

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### **PRESENT:**

M. Benjamin, K. Donovan, A.J. Edwards, A. Evans, L. Howells, D. Llewellyn, J. Morgan, A. Palmer, M. Pointon, R. Stones, N. Yates and A. Wilson.

### **Together with:**

P. Griffiths (LAF Secretary/Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager), A. Fleming (Countryside and Rights of Way Officer), M. Sollis (Administrative Assistant – Support Services, Communities), and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

### **LOCAL ACCESS FORUM TRAINING**

Members of the Local Access Forum (LAF) were provided with a brief training sessions, which outlined the Roles, duties and functions of the Local Access Forums, along with details of the relevant Legislation including the Country and Rights of Way Act 2000, The Countryside Access (Local Access Forums)(Wales) Regulations 2001 and Guidance from Natural Resources Wales (NRW), explaining that Members of the LAF are appointed to the Committee as individuals, and as such Memberships is not transferrable, and substitutes are not appointable from organisations.

The LAF were asked to note the tabled Terms of Reference of the Committee and were also provided with details around Declarations of Interest, and what would be determined as a declaration.

The LAF were also reminded that, on occasion there may be a requirement to uphold confidentiality, in which each will be required to do so and will be advised accordingly.

#### **1. WELCOME**

The new and returning Members of the Local Access Forum were welcomed to the first meeting of the term and introductions were provided around the table.

#### **2. APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR**

The Local Access Forum were asked to note that it is a requirement of the Terms of Reference to appoint a Chair and Vice Chair for ensuing meetings. As such, the Forum were asked to consider any nominations they felt would be most suited to the role and make representations to the relevant Officers in readiness for the next meeting of the LAF.

### 3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N. George (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services), B. Clarke, G. Davies, E. Gwynne, D. Hale, M. Thomas, D. Tolley and W. Williams, together with S. Tindall (Natural Resources Wales).

### 4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

### 5. MINUTES – 7TH JUNE 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2019 were approved as a correct record.

### 6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

**Minute No. 5 (Forestry Path Closures)** – it was noted that in respect of Path Closures, further developments are underway to see the re-opening of paths at Cwmcarn Forest Drive. A further update will be provided at the next meeting.

In addition, the Forum were asked to note that there will be additional felling taking place at the Sirhowy Valley section of the Forest Drive, which is expected to commence imminently and continue until the end of March 2020.

**Minute No. 10 (Webpage)** – It was noted that the Countryside Website has now been completed and was launched 4 weeks ago. The site is now more user-friendly and is regularly updated with the latest information for the Countryside Service and Blogs.

### 7. UPDATE FROM THE LOCAL ACCESS FORUMS CHAIRS AND SECRETARIES ANNUAL MEETING

The Forum were asked to note that a Chairs and Secretaries meeting took place on 17th October in Builth Wells, which was attended by a number of Local Access Forum's (LAF's) from across Wales and representatives from all of the Gwent LAFs.

The Forum were pleased to note that the Minister was also in attendance and provided a presentation on Access Reform, which is aimed to be in place by 2026. It is also hoped that the system will be simplified, which has been the subject of a previous consultation. It was noted that a reporting system will be set up by 2021 which will consist of a Steering Group and an additional 3 Expert Groups. In addition, it was noted that of the original 40 proposals, 7 will be taken forward and investigated as part of the process. The Forum were however pleased to note that the Minister is happy with the work undertaken and achieved by the Local Access Forums and were pleased with the progress being made.

The Officers explained that discussions took place around changes to the Definitive Map, in which a single plan is to be developed, and each local authority will hold cross boundary maps. This is something that will be looked at immediately and requests are being taken for representatives on the Panels, with a reporting deadline of March 2020. It was noted that this resulted in a number of questions and concerns being raised around lack of funding availability for ROWIPs and concerns raised around complaints and work pressures.

It was noted that representatives were present with a keen interest in Horse riding and raised concerns for the lack of horse provisions. It was noted that there isn't sufficient funding for statutory provisions, therefore non-statutory improvements are unlikely to be made. The Forum were pleased to note however, that following these representations, the Minister agreed to look at Grant Funding Legislation and provide a further report at a future meeting.

A presentation was provided at the meeting from Ruth Roake on Multi-use Path Uses and the Forum were pleased to note that Caerphilly are undertaking a number of the points highlighted within the presentation. Concerns were raised by other LAF's on the use of Electric Buggies and dogs using the paths, however it was agreed that this is more of an issue in respect of perception than safety.

It was noted that the National Welsh Representative of Chairs of the LAF provided an update on the work undertaken on the Taking Wales Forward Consultation. It was noted that the LAF process is well embedded however there are aims to try to make LAF's stronger. Representations will be made at a future meeting to the Welsh Government.

Finally an update was provided on LAF Annual Reports in which it was noted that there are some LAFs conducting in line with the legislation however, a number of LAF's, including National Parks are undertaking the reports at the end of the term of a LAF.

The Forum thanked the Officer and noted the update.

## **8. PRESENTATION ON CAERPHILLY'S EXISTING RIGHTS OF WAY**

The Forum welcomed Andy Fleming, Countryside and Rights of Way Officer to the meeting who provided the Forum with an update on the current Rights of Way within the Borough.

It was noted that there are currently 611km of footpaths within the borough, 82km of Bridal routes, 95km of Restricted By-Way and 10KM of By-way open to all Traffic (BOAT), resulting in a total of 44km of Rights of Way within the Caerphilly area, and 41km of claimed Rights of Way Footpaths and 21 bridal routes and 459m of restricted by-way. The Forum were pleased to note that all those noted as claimed can continue in use.

The Local Access Forum discussed a number of Acts including Stopping up and Diversion orders and the Town and County Planning Act, which can be used in relation to Rights of Way and following discussion, it was agreed that a presentation be provided at the next meeting with a summary of the various legislations, as well as hypothetical examples.

The Forum were provided with an update on the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS), which is now available to Officers providing accurate information on site and access to electronic definitive maps. It was noted however that the electronic Definitive Maps are not fully up to date, and therefore are not currently accessible to the public. The Forum noted however that should they require access, the hard copies are available in the office for viewing if required.

The Forum thanked the Officer for the update and discussion ensued.

Further discussion took place around the definitive maps and it was queried whether individual maps are available in Islwyn, Rhymney Valley and Bedwas and Machen and it was noted that these are available, however there are a number of anomalies on the electronic version, therefore this is not available to the public at present.

Queries were raised around the anomalies on the map and it was noted that these include issues with the line thickness drawn on the Maps, as well as the allocation of walls and fences and therefore the original maps are to be used for development purposes.

A Member raised queries around the claimed bridal paths, which may not be identified on the map and whether these can be used. Officers explained that there are a number of paths being used, which justifies the claims, however, where they have not been officially recognised as Rights of Way and are running through owned land, many land owners are blocking them off and restricting access. It was reiterated that, if they are not identified on the map, they are not a legal path and therefore the land owner has the right to prevent access.

The Local Access Forum thanked the Officer for the update and welcomed the proposal for a detailed presentation at the next meeting.

## **9. PRESENTATION ON GRANTS**

The Local Access Forum were provided with an update on the Grant funding streams, for which there are 3 main streams which includes the ENROW Grant, which is a collaboration across Gwent in which £36million has been allocated as grant funding and Caerphilly currently have 2 grant bids approved under this Grant heading. It was noted that the grant aims to provide regional working within Gwent for biodiversity bases and will fund a training Programme within Blaenau Gwent, as well as 8 apprenticeships with an additional Healthy Outdoor Recreation Post, which has worked well. The Forum noted that the bid had to be re-submitted due to a temporary withdrawal of funding, and as such has resulted in additional funding and time to deliver on the Grant.

The Forum noted the Sustainable Management Scheme in which 2 projects are involved to create a broad project to manage the Uplands across Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly County Borough Councils. It was noted that Torfaen are the lead authority for the Scheme and are working together for better land management.

The Main Grant Scheme was discussed and it was noted that there is currently nothing new to report. Work is underway as part of the Valleys Regional Grant to provide a visitor centre in Penallta, which has proved beneficial to the site.

The Forum thanked the Officer for the update and discussion ensued.

A Member queried what has replaced the Regional Development Plan (RDP) and Officers explained that this is currently being discussed and something similar to the previous RDP will be in existence.

Discussions took place around a bike trail link in Caerphilly and it was noted that this is under development to help to link Lansbury Park to the Community and break the rural/urban divide. Regular meetings on these plans are held in Rudry Community Centre.

The Forum thanked the Officer for the update and noted the item

## **10. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ROWIP)**

The Forum discussed the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and it was noted that that this is a procedural undertaking and is expected that they be completed by Local Access Forum's, however due to the recent changes in legislation and reliance on Natural Resources Wales for a number of elements, it has been agreed that these be put on hold until things can be accurately aligned.

## **11. MEMBERSHIP**

Officers explained that the recent appointments to the Forum have resulted in the Local

Access Forum being at Capacity, however, there has been some recent interest from National Search and Rescuer Dog Association (NSADA). The Forum were asked to consider whether a presentation on the work of NSADA would be beneficial and consideration could then be given to an appointment to the Forum, should capacity allow. The Forum were in agreement with the Officer suggested and recommended they be invited to a future meeting.

The Forum were reminded that their appointments to the Local Access Forum has been made on a personal basis and not based on their organisation, therefore, should Members not be able to attend, substitutes cannot be sent in their place.

The Forum thanked the Officer for the update.

## **12. FUTURE TRAINING**

Officers provided the Forum with an update on some of the upcoming Training available, which included a Chairs Training session, which has been scheduled for Monday 16 December 2019 at 5pm in Penallta House.

Further training opportunities were discussed including Disability Awareness which will be held in Parc Cwmdarren during the summer 2020 and further updates will be provided in due course.

Members were asked to consider any other training requirements they may have and update the Secretariat accordingly.

## **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS/ TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETING**

The Forum discussed items for discussion at future meetings and it was agreed that a presentation from NSADA would be beneficial to the Forum and Officers agreed to make arrangements for them to attend a future meeting.

Access to the Countryside was discussed and it was felt that a presentation or further information would be useful for the Forum on responsible access to the Countryside, as well as some of the main issues affecting the Countryside. The Forum also discussed Fly-Tipping and it was agreed that as it is a much wider issue, it be discussed as a separate item at a future meeting.

## **14. DATE AND VENUE FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Forum discussed dates and times for future meetings and agreed the following:

Friday 6th March 2020 at 10am in the Sirhowy Room, Penallta House

Friday 5th June 2020 at 10am in the Sirhowy Room, Penallta House

Friday 4th September 2020 at 10am in the Sirhowy Room, Penallta House

Friday 27th November 2020 at 10am in the Sirhowy Room, Penallta House

The Chair thanked all parties present for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 11.25 pm.