



## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON FRIDAY,  
15TH AUGUST 2014 AT 2.00 PM

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PRESENT:

William Lindsay - Chairman  
Garry Lewis - Deputy Chairman

Barry Clarke, Keith Donovan, Andrew Edwards, Roger Evans, Elaine Gwynne, Robert Jones, Alison Palmer, David Parry, Maggie Thomas, Nigel Yates.

Together with:

Philip Griffiths (Secretary and Principal Planner), Andy Powell (Countryside Access & Rights of Way Officer), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Glyn Davies, J.R. Davies, Sylvia Dolbear, Lorraine Howells, Councillor Ken James, Sarah Tindal and Emma Felkin (Natural Resources Wales).

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations received.

**3. SITE VISIT**

The Chair thanked officers for arranging the site visit that had taken place earlier at Parc Cwm Darran.

**4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2014 were confirmed as a correct record.

**5. MATTERS ARISING**

Minute no. 4 (9) - A meeting with representatives of the horse-riding sector had now taken place. A further meeting was scheduled for the autumn.

Minute no. 5 - The comments of the LAF sub-group in relation to the Nant Llesg planning application had been forwarded to the Planning Department.

Minute no. 8 - Consultation on the candidate sites had taken place and officers were in the process of analysing a series of spatial strategies for the plan.

Minute no. 17 - It was noted that the footpath issue at Graig y Rhacca Farm had not yet been resolved. (Andy Powell agreed to discuss this further with Elaine Gwynne after the meeting).

## **6. CHAIR'S REPORT**

William Lindsay briefed the Forum on his attendance at the Chairs' Conference in March at which there had been a talk from Daniel Thomas on the response to the Review of Open Access and Recreation in Wales consultation; an update from Jane Tibbert on Glastir; reference to the NRW survey of LAFs working practices and discussion on the loss of ROW records in 1958.

The Chair and Andy Powell had also recently attended a LAF Conference at which John Griffiths AM, Minister for Natural Resources, Culture and Sport, outlined his priorities for access and recreation. The initial pre consultation exercise period allowed interested groups to state their views on the issues involved. A wide range of views had been received on all aspects including rights of way and access to water.

Carys Drew (NRW) talked about the NRW survey on LAF working practises, which had been completed by Caerphilly LAF at its October 2013 meeting. The survey had apparently provided a good overview of how LAFs work and had highlighted a need to address some issues including non-attendance at meetings and the problem of attracting new members. Discussion had taken place on the drawing up of the agenda; improving a LAF's performance and the relevance of the Annual Report. There had also been a talk from John Bulbeck on promoted routes and the idea of developing existing routes by adding links.

The Chair then referred to an inspirational talk from Phil Jayne, Programme Manager "Come Outside!". Come Outside! aims to inspire, motivate and support people from Communities First cluster areas across Wales to enjoy the outdoors, experience the benefits and value and care for the natural environment. Come Outside! Regional Coordinators are supporting the development of a Come Outside! Network in each cluster area. These are being formed by bringing together organisations working in community development, youth services, health improvement and the environment and outdoor sectors. The programme is funded by Big Lottery Fund, NRW and Welsh Government's Homes and Places Division and the Communities First Programme.

A workshop, organised by NRW, was held at the conference to seek ideas on the Outdoor Recreation and Access Strategy, which is currently being developed by NRW. It was noted that NRW had not yet formally consulted LAFs on this document, however Members were encouraged to read the document, which Andy advised can be accessed online.

## **7. ACCESS GREEN PAPER**

Andy Powell gave an update on the current position regarding the green paper. It was noted that John Griffiths AM, who was appointed Minister for Culture and Sport in March 2013, had launched a review of legislation relating to access and outdoor recreation in July 2013 with a view to finding ways of increasing opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors and the social and economic benefits this can bring. The initial pre-consultation exercise allowed interested groups to submit their views and facilitated discussions and consideration of the issues involved. A wide range of views was expressed on all the matters covered by the review, including rights of way and access to water. The Minister has stated that it is not planned to pursue primary legislation on this during the term of this Assembly.

Andy would seek advice as to when it was likely that the LAF could provide an input into the review and suggested that Members start to think about how they see the LAF's role in the future as there may be an opportunity to tweak Guidance Notes 1 and 2 of the CROW legislation.

In the meantime, the Chair of the National LAF has asked individual LAFs to look at how their views might be fed into the legislation. Andy circulated copies of the LAF's formal response to NRW's survey on the Review of LAF Working Practises, which it was agreed would form the basis of the LAF's response. Any further comments would need to be forwarded to Andy/Phil by Tuesday in order for them to be collated and included in the response.

During the course of the ensuing discussion, a query was raised on the Access Newsletter referred to in question 36 of the NRW questionnaire, which used to be sent to LAF secretaries for circulation to Forum members. It was noted that this is produced by NRW twice a year and can be viewed online. The newsletter is particularly useful in terms of new legislation/guidance coming through. Reference was also made to the requirement for LAFs to produce an Annual Report setting out what they had achieved and their objectives for the future, at least once every three years. Whilst officers used to produce an Annual Report on behalf of the Forum, on an annual basis, due to officers' commitments and workloads, this had not recently been possible. It was agreed that officers would explore whether this requirement could be increased from 3 to 4 years. The Report would then tie in with the life cycle of the Forum.

## **8. FUNDING**

The Forum received an update on funding issues from Phil Griffiths. A new WG Nature Fund, worth £6m, has been introduced which will be used to help halt the decline of wild life and habitats in Wales. It would focus on 7 geographical sites, including the South Wales Valleys, Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast. The scheme would provide funding for 5 key activities i.e. improvement river catchments; action on marine ecosystems; the local environment; to realise potential in upland areas and to stimulate innovation. WG is encouraging partnership working and joint projects relating to rivers in the area, invasives, pollinators and uplands and woodlands had already been submitted for consideration.

In terms of other funding sources, the Forum was advised that the Valleys Regional Park is still an important green economic driver in South Wales and that CCBC had been successful in obtaining £1k for the Caerphilly Environmental Quality Fund. As far as NRW is concerned, ROWIP funding is secure for next year. NRW also offers competitive awards/grants, which are directed to discrete projects with targeted outputs and also strategic grants involving long term commitments to work towards specified joint outcomes.

## **9. ROWIP**

Andy Powell confirmed that the Council had been awarded £37,480 this year to implement the ROWIP. Projects this year included two new bridges on two promoted routes, further development of the Volunteer network, promotional material for public rights of way, works at Rudry Common, improvement to footsteps, DDA improvements county wide and a DDA partnership project in Caerphilly.

In terms of the future, the ROWIP is a 10 year plan which is due to finish in 2017. Minister John Griffiths has confirmed that the plan would remain until 2017 although he has been non committal on the levels of future funding. Officers were, however, optimistic that funding would continue for several more years albeit at perhaps a reduced allocation. In May this year the Minister announced that he intended to issue updated guidance to local authorities on ROWIPs within 12 months and in time for the ten-yearly review of those plans in 2017.

During the course of the ensuing debate officers were asked how the ROWIP monies are targeted across the County Borough. Officers responded that possibly more was spent in the south in previous years as the VRP and HoV funding was specifically for schemes in the north of the County Borough. However, since funding streams have dried up, the ROWIP monies are spread right across the County Borough. In response to another query, officers confirmed that ROWIP monies have to be spent on improvements to the network.

#### **10. RDP**

Phil Griffiths updated the Forum on the current RDP and the next round, which is due to start in 2015. Examples were received of the various projects that had been undertaken.

The current RDP is coming to an end and a new round of European funding would offer opportunities in terms of developing routes where there is potential for recreational development. The Authority would receive at least £2.5m over a five year period.

#### **11. WALK EVENT**

Andy Powell briefed the Forum on this year's walking event. A record number of entrants had participated in the event, which took place in May in the north of the County Borough. Officers expressed their grateful thanks to everyone who had assisted in the staging of the event, which had received very positive feedback.

#### **12. COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY - CROSS COMPLIANCE PROPOSALS FOR 2015**

Phil Griffiths updated the Forum on Caerphilly's response to consultation on the Cross Compliance proposals for 2015. Cross Compliance is a European Union requirement setting out standards that farmers have to meet in order to receive their current Single Payment Scheme (known as Direct Payment in 2015) and Rural Development Payment support. As a consequence of CAP reform, the European Commission is revising the regulatory structure of Cross Compliance from 2015. There are some changes proposed and some revision to the existing structure. However the key overarching areas covered by Cross Compliance remain similar to those under the current regulation.

The consultation document sought responses to 16 questions, 15 of which related to agriculture. The remaining one proposed changes to legislation on public rights of way. This related to the digitisation of definitive maps. The thinking being that a requirement to standardize maps to a regulated electronic format would provide more consistent up to date information for public use of paths across Wales. Once this was achieved consideration would be given to including maintenance of public rights of way under cross compliance in Wales.

The general feeling was that the proposals contained in the document would dilute the present system and create more work on the ground.

#### **13. NANT LLESG**

Andy Powell informed the Forum that there had been no real progress with the Nant Llesg planning application. The Planning Department had requested further information from the developers and dialogue between planning officers and the developers is ongoing. It is not known at this stage when the application will be submitted to the Planning Committee.

The feedback from the LAF has been input and logged and if any new information is submitted which will need comments from the LAF, it will be notified through either the Chair or Secretary.

#### **14. FLY TIPPING**

A request had been received from Forum Member, David Parry, for this item to be placed on the agenda for discussion.

Mr Parry expressed strong concerns in relation to the Council's proposals to introduce charges from 1st October 2014 for small vans and trailers collecting certain waste matters from the Council's civic amenity sites, which he felt would result in increased levels of fly tipping. Vans greater than the Ford Transit size, Luton vans, tippers and trailers greater than 1.8 m in length will be banned from using the sites irrespective of the type of waste being carried.

Officers sign posted members of the Forum to a link on the Council's website where members of the public may express their views on the future of the Council's services via the budget consultation process. It was also suggested that a letter could be sent on behalf of the LAF to the Council department, which deals with waste collection, expressing concerns about the likelihood of increased fly tipping within the area as a result of the proposed charges. Reference was also made to the Fly Tip Wales Action Team, which will lend cameras to Councils and established groups to monitor sites where fly tipping takes place. Phil Griffiths agreed to make enquires about the number of successful prosecutions.

It was noted that Welsh Government is currently consulting on a fly tipping strategy.

#### **15. PLANNING AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY**

A request had been received from Forum Member, Maggie Thomas for this item to be placed on the agenda for discussion.

Ms Thomas asked for consideration to be given to a small sub-group being formed to meet and discuss matters relating to planning applications which involve diversions/extinguishment of public rights of way, with a view to guidelines being drawn up for developers.

Arising from discussion, it was agreed that Andy would arrange a meeting with the Council's Development Control Manager to discuss this matter further.

#### **16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **Dog Walking**

Following the refresh of the Countryside Code in 2012, Natural England and NRW discussed developing a project to update its advice for dog walkers and replace the publication "You and Your Dog in the Countryside". To aid the development of this project a Dog Advice Working Group (DAWG) was set up. Members were invited to submit their views on the guide, which was circulated at the meeting, to Phil/Andy by 15th September 2014.

##### **Byron Grubb**

It was noted that Byron Grubb had recently resigned from CPRW and would therefore no longer participate in the LAF. It was agreed that the Secretary write to Byron thanking him for his contribution to the LAF during his term of office. A replacement for Byron would be sought in due course.

##### **Volunteers**

It was noted that officers were currently exploring ways of extending the base of volunteers who assist with the maintenance of the footpath network.

**17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Details of the arrangements for the next meeting would be sent to Forum members in due course.

The meeting closed at 5pm.