



## CAERPHILLY LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PARC CWM DARRAN ON FRIDAY, 12TH DECEMBER 2014 AT 10.00 AM

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#### PRESENT:

William Lindsay - Chair  
Garry Lewis - Deputy Chair

Roger Evans, Lorraine Howells, David Parry, Maggie Thomas, Nigel Yates.

#### Together with:

Philip Griffiths (Secretary and Principal Planner), June Piper (CROW Support Officer), Sharon Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Barry Clarke, Glyn Davies, J.R. Davies, Sylvia Dolbear, Keith Donovan, Andrew Edwards, Elaine Gwynne, Councillor Ken James, Alison Palmer, Andy Powell and Sarah Tindal.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Lorraine Howells advised that she would need to declare an interest during any discussion on the Nant Llesg open cast proposals.

#### 3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th August 2014 were confirmed as a correct record subject to it being noted under Minute No. 14 - Fly Tipping - that the second sentence of paragraph 2 should read 'for small vans and trailers depositing certain waste matters'.

#### 4. MATTERS ARISING

Minute No. 14 - Fly Tipping.

Further concerns were expressed in relation to the rise in the number of incidents of fly tipping in the county borough. It was noted that between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014, CCBC had dealt with 2609 incidents of fly tipping. The Secretary agreed to send a letter to the Council on behalf of the LAF expressing concerns about the increase in fly tipping since the charge on small vans and trailers depositing waste at Civic Amenity Sites was introduced.

Minute No. 15 - Planning and Public Rights of Way

The Secretary advised that he had spoken to the Development Control Manager who had confirmed that he would be happy to meet and discuss the matter raised at the last meeting in relation to the diversion of footpaths on new developments.

**5. THE ACTIVE TRAVEL (WALES) ACT 2013**

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 requires local authorities to produce maps (known as existing route maps) showing the routes and facilities in certain areas (called designated localities) that are safe and suitable for active travel.

A note providing information on the detail of the project for local authorities was circulated at the meeting. The guidance sets out the tasks and the engagement that local authorities will need to undertake and explains the support they will receive. Information was also provided on the use of the Active Travel mapping funding awarded through the Local Transport Fund.

It was noted that Sustrans would carry out the initial survey, which will cover the designated localities only. This will include resurveying of areas that have already produced cycling maps i.e. Cardiff, Swansea and Newport. Sustrans will conduct a desktop analysis of existing walking and cycling route data. This will be an opportunity for local authorities to provide any existing GIS data that they wish to be included. The next step will be a pre-survey consultation with local authority officers followed by a field survey. Once the field survey is complete Sustrans will conduct the post-survey processing onto the data management system. After the processing has been completed, it will be resupplied to local authorities and Sustrans volunteers for accuracy checks. Local Authorities will need to formally submit their maps to Welsh Government for approval by no later than 24th September 2015.

During the course of the discussion concern was expressed in relation to the speed at which some cyclists travel along paths and other routes and clarification was sought on the criteria that would be used for determining whether a track was suitable for an active travel route.

For the purposes of the Active Travel (Wales) Act, a route in a local authority's area is an active travel route if the route is situated in a designated locality in the area and the local authority considers that it is appropriate for it to be regarded as an active travel route. In considering whether it is appropriate for a route to be regarded as an active travel route, a local authority must take into account whether the route facilitates the making by, or by any description of, walkers and cyclists of active travel journeys and whether the location, nature and condition of the route make it suitable for safe use by walkers and cyclists for the making of such journeys.

The initial survey data set will allow for many of the routes to be considered as a desktop exercise, between local knowledge and detailed information presented about width/gradients/access barriers, it should be possible to take an initial view of suitable routes for active travel.

**6. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RDP)**

It was noted that the current round of RDP funding comes to an end on 31st December 2014. A draft Local Development Strategy has been prepared and submitted to Welsh Government with a view to new funding coming through in January. For the new programme WG is expecting areas to join together at least for the administrative functions in order to realise some cost efficiencies. For this reason Caerphilly CBC has been leading on the development process in a joint initiative with Blaenau Gwent CBC, which is new to the RDP and only has two eligible wards. CCBC will fulfil the role of Administrative Body, which is responsible for

the overall delivery of the programme, financial propriety and compliance and other functions prescribed by WG. A proposed joint Caerphilly/Blaenau Gwent project would receive an indicative allocation of approximately £3.2 m over 7 years.

Phil Griffiths informed that Dan Coles, former RDP Delivery Manager, had recently left the Authority for a post with Coleg Gwent. Dan had been a key player in driving forward the current RDP programme. Owen Ashton, former HoV Project Manager, had been appointed to the post on a temporary basis until the next round of funding had been confirmed.

In order to participate in the programme and access the funding available a new Local Action Group (LAG) had been established and a Local Development Strategy (LDS) had been prepared and submitted to WG for approval. It was noted that three members of the Caerphilly LAF i.e. Lorraine Howells, Andrew Edwards and Glyn Davies had been appointed to the LAG.

## **7. ROWIP**

June Piper gave an update on the ROWIP and showed slides of some of the projects that had been undertaken over the years. The sum of £37,480 had been made available to the Authority this year to implement the ROWIP. Work included improvements to various footpaths and steps, the provision of a disabled ramp, replacement of stiles with kissing gates, bridge installations etc. Measures were also being taken to try and prevent the continuing misuse of a footpath by cyclists.

During the course of the discussion officers confirmed that the Probation Service were keen to continue to help with the maintenance of the footpath network.

## **8. FUNDING**

Phil Griffiths gave an update on funding and advised the Forum of the outcome of bids to the WG Nature Fund. A grant of £280,000 had been awarded to Torfaen CBC from WG's Nature Fund to lead a collaboration to help restore historically important uplands across four local authority areas. The project has been developed with a partnership group, which includes Blaenau Gwent CBC, Caerphilly CBC, Brecon Beacons National Park, Gwent Police and Gwent Wildlife Trust. A management plan will be prepared to support long term investment in upland areas across the Eastern Valleys and will also address issues of landscape crime and in particular the use of off-road vehicles. A pollinators project had also been approved. News of an invasive species project bid was still awaited.

Natural Resources Wales is investing £4.2m in projects to improve environments across Wales. NRW will work in partnership with successful organisations to develop projects and partnerships. CCBC had submitted a bid for Mynydd Maen via the Competitive Fund and also for works in the Upper Sirhowy Valley. A bid for an invasive species project had also been put forward and an Aggregate Levy bid was being considered for access works in the Machen area. An update on these would be provided at the next meeting.

## **9. HORSE RIDERS' MEETING**

The Forum was advised that an initial meeting had been held with horse riding representatives from the four quarters of the County Borough. In conjunction with the new SAFE representative for Caerphilly, Mike Burrows, arrangements would be made to hold a further meeting in January once the SAFE representative had been inducted into his role.

## **10. MEMBER INPUT**

Members were asked to consider whether they were happy with the way in which the LAF is currently administered. The Secretary sought ideas from the Forum for items of a strategic nature that could be discussed at future meetings. A rolling programme of topics could then be produced and issues explored in advance of the meeting. Items could then be scheduled and prioritised for future meetings.

In this respect the Forum discussed the continuing problem of drivers of off road vehicles causing damage to the environment in many parts of the country. A radio programme which highlighted the problem of the destruction of green lanes in the Peak District by irresponsible off road drivers, suggested that local authorities work together to secure more funding and legal assistance to help fight this problem and halt the destruction of walks that have been used for generations. It was noted that huge strides in tackling rural crime in Gwent are being made with the introduction of the OWL (Online Watch Link) system, which sends out targeted messages via email, phone or SMS alerts about crime and problems in the area, to people who have signed up to the system. Phil Griffiths agreed to prepare a report on this issue for discussion at a future meeting.

During the course of the ensuing discussion, appreciation was expressed of all the support provided by officers in administering the Forum.

## **11. WALK EVENT**

It was noted that next year's Walk Event will take place on 9th May 2015 at Twmbarlwm. There will be routes suitable for all fitness levels and abilities i.e. 1 - 5 mile led walk; 8 - 11 mile led walk; 14 - 16 mile self led challenge and a 22 - 24 mile self led challenge. Bookings will be taken from 1st January 2015.

## **12. FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was agreed that future meetings of the LAF would be held at Penallta House on the following dates:

- Friday, 13th March 2015 at 10 am
- Friday, 12th June 2015 at 10 am
- Friday, 11th September 2015 at 10 am
- Friday, 11th December 2015 at 10 am

The Chair closed the meeting at 11.45 am and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.