

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held  
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Tuesday, 24th November, 2020 at 2.30 pm**

**PRESENT:** Irene Brooke (IB)  
Jenny Cockitt (JC)  
Anthea Fairey (AF)  
David Farnsworth (DF)  
Sylvia Fowles (SF)  
Sheila Hampshire (SH)  
Shan Lewis (SL)  
Phil Mundell (PM)  
Mark Storey (MS )  
Anne Underwood (AU)  
Ann Webb (AW)

## **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Paul Keeble	Group Engineer (Highways and Flood Management)
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Ruth Rourke	Principal Officer - Countryside Access

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from members: Gordon Davies, Tracy Hook, David Smith and Martin Sweeney and from observers: Sarah Tindal (Natural Resources Wales), and Laura Bazely (MCC Legal) (LB).

### **2. Introductions by Members**

ML welcomed members to the meeting which was being held virtually in accordance with the provisions of The Countryside Access (Local Access Forum) (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.

The meeting was the first meeting of the new local access forum and accordingly set by the appropriate regulations and guidance, and chaired by the Local Access Forum Secretary. Introductions were made around the table with members outlining their areas of interest and observers their role in assisting the forum.

### **3. Initial Briefing by Appointing Authority**

ML introduced the initial briefing by way of a presentation. The presentation covered the statutory basis of the forum and the role of members and the authority. In response to a question from DF about activities beyond the statutory "advice" function ML confirmed that the forum can if it wish engage in positive action beyond being responsive to requests for its advice and views. Particular attention was drawn to the need to make declarations of any interests in respect of subjects under discussion and LB will provide further guidance at the next meeting, as part of the consideration of terms of reference.

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ML explained that the appointing authority is responsible for the production and publishing of an annual report. The, delayed, annual report for the last year of the previous forum (for 2019/20) could be published after this new forum considers its forward work plan at the next meeting.

ML outlined the scope of MonLife and the countryside access team, including their responsibilities and structure. He went on to summarise the wider context, including the wellbeing assessment, tourism and the destination management plan, active travel and resources, including external grants.

RR summarised countryside access policy, including the improvement plan, and the impact of flooding and Covid since the forum last met on usage, which had considerably increased, and on partnerships, volunteering and projects.

In the discussion that followed IB enquired about discussing the Ramblers Association Lost Ways project and ML indicated this could be suggested when the forward work plan is discussed at the next meeting. MS enquired about the 2026 "cut off" date and RR confirmed that Welsh Government had indicated their intent to remove this as part of the proposed access reforms. PM asked about the extent to which repairs were possible under the current Covid restrictions. RR indicated the situation had improved and now some work together, prioritising health and safety issues, was possible, but less than would have been undertaken in a usual year. AU and JC enquired about the accessibility for horse on the proposed Caldicot Greenway. ML confirmed that the scheme was under consideration and the potential use by horses had been identified as an issue. JC also raised the same issue in respect of the Llanfoist bridge proposal.

#### **4. The appointment procedure for Chair and Deputy Chair**

ML explained that in accordance with the regulations the next meeting included the election of a Chair and Deputy Chair. In the ordinary course of events this would take place by a secret ballot conducted at the meeting. However in view of the constraints imposed by a virtual meeting the temporary regulations allowed for the forum to conduct this election by such procedure as the forum decides. ML suggested that a possible way forward was for a request to be made for nominations to the roles by email; self-nomination being acceptable. Those members who agreed to stand would complete a short statement as to their reason for standing. ML could then make the necessary arrangements for members to vote by email prior to the second meeting, which could confirm the final decisions. This approach was agreed.

#### **5. Dates and times of future meetings**

As indicated in the presentation the next meeting's agenda includes the election of a Chair and Deputy Chair, agreement of the terms of reference, a discussion regarding whether additional members and observers are required to cover the full range of interests, and the future work programme. It was agreed a date would be set early in January 2021 for this meeting which would also be a virtual meeting.

**The meeting ended at 4.00 pm**