

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Tuesday, 9th March, 2021 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: I.Brooke, R. Campbell, J. Cockitt, A. Fairey, D. Farnsworth, S. Fowles, S. Hampshire, T. Hook, S. Lewis, P.Mundell, D.Smith, M.Storey, S. Tindal and County Councillor A. Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Laura Bazely	Legal Services
Susan Hughes	Active Travel Officer
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 / Introductions

Apologies were received from members: Gordon Davies, Anthea Fairey and Martin Sweeney.

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 second meeting of the new local access forum and accordingly set by the appropriate regulations and guidance, and initially 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

2. Declarations of Interest

LB outlined the requirements on LAF members and the circumstances where a declaration of interests would be appropriate, whether a personal or prejudicial interest.

3. Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

ML advised that one nomination had been received for each post, Anne Underwood for Chair and Irene Brooke for Deputy Chair. The nominations were put to the members and were unanimously agreed.

AU took the Chair

4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 24 November 2020

The minutes of the meeting of 24 November 2020 were approved as a correct record.

5. Agreement of terms of reference

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The terms of reference for the Local Access Forum were approved

6. Discussions regarding additional members and observers

AU introduced the item, the LAF was well represented in respect of walking and horse-riding interests and had more land owner representation than previously. It was noted that member's interest also extended to water based access and off road cycling but that no motorised access interests were present. A discussion ensued as to whether the LAF should seek to recruit representation from the motorised access interests, potentially a member from one of the representative groups, and it was agreed that the appointing authority would explore this further.

ML introduced the proposed observers to the LAF; noted that MCC, NRW and have one observer as of right, RR and ST respectively and by agreement that additional observers can be added as following: for MCC, PK & SHu, and for NRW: RC. This was agreed.

A discussion followed considered the impacts of the emergency Covid closures on countryside access, including public forests, and how these arrangements developed over the period and the different lockdown. Both ML and RC outlined their respective approaches to visitor management and how both MCC and NRW had tried to develop a more nuanced approach in the second lockdown and built on experience as the situation developed. The need to promote the Countryside Code was also raised.

7. Future Work Programme

ML presented the outline work programme and outlined the core items, delivery of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan, statutory consultations, performance measures and funding / projects.

ML reminded the LAF that the forum has the ability to appoint working groups if members see fit for specific tasks

A discussion followed on other work programme priorities and the following were identified for future consideration: Access during an emergency / promotion of the Countryside Code; Definitive Map Modification Order prioritisation; the Ramblers Association Lost Ways project / Slow Ways, this was identified as a potential working group; Active Travel; Reinstating access to the IPROW magazine for LAF members was raised.

8. Dates and timing of future meetings

The forum agreed it would continue to meet on an afternoon, and virtually as long as the Regulations allow (Secretary's note: the Regulations allowing virtual meetings have been extended to 31 December 2021).

The meeting ended at 4.25 pm