



Monmouthshire
Local Access Forum
Annual Report
17/18



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Chairman's Foreword

Draft to be agreed

This Report covers the first year of the current Forum to 25 January 2018.

I am the elected Chair and my Deputy is Irene Brookes. Our Secretary is Matthew Lewis, Green Infrastructure and Countryside Manager and meetings are attended by Ruth Rourke, Countryside Access Officer and Alan Clarke the Minute Secretary.

Details of our workload for the year are set out in the Review below. We have spent considerable time this year debating and commenting on a variety of issues including the Rights of Way Improvement Plan review and the response to Welsh Government's consultation paper. Irene and I have also worked closely with the National Representative for Welsh LAFs attending the National Chairs meeting and the National LAF Conference.

I also very much appreciate the contribution made by all the members who have a wide range of knowledge and experience.

Anne Underwood

Secretary's Report

This report marks the completion of the first year of the current LAF from its first meeting on 25 January 2017. On recruitment, the forum's membership stood at 12 meeting the statutory minimum. However three resignations during the year have led to the forum falling below the statutory minimum and this has remained so. However during the year an additional regular observer joined the LAF and has participated in meetings.

The more formal approach to the LAF agenda's, reports and meetings has continued this year and has been successful in focussing the LAF activities.

During the past year the forum met on 25 January 2017 at Hilston Park, near Monmouth; 6 February 2017 in Monmouth; 22 May 2017 in Abergavenny; 7 September 2017 in Monmouth and 20 November 2017 in Gilwern.

The LAF members continue to contribute to the resolution and development of countryside access issues and policy in Monmouthshire.

We are very grateful for their voluntary input and for the experience and advice they provide and their commitment to the work of the forum.

Matthew Lewis, Secretary

The Year reviewed

These are some of the issues where the LAF have advised and been consulted:-

1. RoWIP Review

The forum has considered the RoWIP Review as part of its initial briefing in terms of the timetable and proposed programme and in May to consider the response to the first required stage; the initial consultation.

Having a well prepared RoWIP has considerably helped obtain funding for a variety of projects since 2007 and the forum is of the view that a timely review of the RoWIP should be completed and that the review should involve as many interests as possible.

The RoWIP review is likely to be the main focus of the new LAF's work over the coming year. The LAF Secretary will ensure the LAF is appropriately briefed and involved.

3. Prioritisation

The LAF has continued to receive information on numbers of outstanding issues and their prioritisation. The forum has reviewed the current approach to prioritising claims for Definitive Map Modification Orders, the legal process by which the Definitive Map and Statement can be modified. The forum has advised on potential changes to the programme of review.

4. Consultations

Welsh Government published a Consultation Paper on the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources which included proposals relating to access to the outdoors, building on the previous Green Paper. The forum carefully considered its response to this far-reaching consultation in September and November 2017.

In addition, the forum has responded on a proposed Glastir Scheme permissive access scheme at Penallt, which included a site visit by members and to Herefordshire Council on their Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review.

5. Projects and funding

We have received updates on the various funding streams and improvement projects being undertaken, including those being supported by the Wales Coastal Access Improvement Programme, the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Grant, National Trails Grant for Offa's Dyke Path and the Council's own capital programme. We have also discussed the potential new delivery model for considering options for the future delivery of Tourism, Leisure, Cultural & Youth Services (TLCY), including countryside services, countryside access sites and rights of way.

We have continued to closely review progress on projects including the "Mon Lane Care" volunteering scheme, which has unfortunately stalled.

Work Carried Out in 2017/18

No	Item	On Draft Plan or Additional	When Done
	Membership		
1.	Formal briefing by the Appointing Authority of new members	Yes	25 Jan 2017;
	Election of Chair and Vice Chair	Yes	6 Feb 2017;
	Approval of Terms of Reference	Yes	6 Feb 2017
	Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review		
2	Report of first stage consultation	Yes	22 May 2017
	Prioritising claims for Definitive Map Modification Orders	Yes	20 Nov 2017
	Consultations		
3.	Response to the Welsh Government Consultation Paper: Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources	Yes	7 Sept 2017 20 Nov 2017
	Proposed Glastir Scheme Permissive Access	Additional	7 Sept 2017
	Herefordshire ROWIP	Additional	7 Sept 2017
	Special Projects		
4.	Proposed new delivery model for Tourism, Leisure, Culture & Youth Services	Yes	22 May 2017;
	Mon Lane Care Scheme	Yes	22 May 2017

Future Work Programme

The forum's future work programme for 2018/19 is primarily to continue to advise in respect of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review which will progress during the year and to respond as appropriately to any additional consultations that may arise. The forward work programme was approved by the LAF on 7 September 2017 (see below).

Role of the Forum

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities and National Parks, to establish Local Access Forums (LAFs). These forums advise Natural Resources Wales (NRW), local authorities and National Park authorities on ways in which local access can be improved.

The statutory purpose of LAFs is to advise on the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area in which they are established. LAF's must have regard to the needs of land management, natural beauty, flora, fauna, and geological and physiographical features.

The following bodies must have regard to any relevant advice given by the LAF: National Park authority, the highway authority, Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and, for matters relating to defence or security, the Secretary of State.

The forums must have a balance between:

- Users of access land and local rights of way; and
- Landowners and occupiers of access land and land with rights of way.

People with other interests especially relevant to the area will also be represented.

The Regulations specify there should be between 12 and 22 members, including the Chair and the Deputy. In addition the Chair may invite other individuals and organisations to observe and give advice.

Members are appointed by the Appointing Authority the local Highway Authority or National Park Authority. Monmouthshire County Council is the appointing authority for the Monmouthshire LAF which covers the administrative County of Monmouthshire outside the boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It includes the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Beauty within the county.

Within the area there are Registered Commons and 1657 Kilometres of registered Public Rights of Way. There is in addition a substantial length of County Unclassified Roads, the responsibility of the Highway Section, many of which are un-surfaced.

Monmouthshire County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority have a Delegated Responsibility Agreement covering most aspects of the management of Public Rights of Way within the National Park.

Contacts

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LAF agendas, reports and minutes can be found on the Council's meetings calendar under the appropriate dates <http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/home/local-democracy-and-councillors/council-meetings> If not available please contact the Secretary.

Appendix 1: Forum Membership

Membership to end of current forum's period of office (25 January 2020)

NAME	INTERESTS
John ASKEW Resigned May 2017	4x4 driving. Sustainable outdoor recreation. Promoting on and off road driving ethics and education. Proactive and volunteer repairs / maintenance to vehicular ROW. Map reading and advising other users and groups. Keeping green lanes open and usable. Survey works and ensuring information is readily available and updated.
Pat BELSTEN Resigned Nov 2017	I am interested in the "wellbeing" of the countryside including the health benefits to all; also as a commoner am interested in commons.
Irene BROOKE (Deputy Chair)	Farmer with local business and tourism interests. Enthusiastic walker in Monmouthshire and other areas of UK. Dog walker, horse rider and photographer. Flora and fauna of Angiddy Valley. Member of CLA, NFU and Monmouthshire Meadows Group.
Anthea FAIREY	Chair of Friends of Castle Meadows, Abergavenny which works together with Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) to encourage access for all into the Meadows and to encourage various groups and individuals to participate in the enhancement and conservation of this unique habitat.
Syliva FOWLES (Regular Observer since July 2017)	<i>tbc</i>
Sheila HAMPSHIRE	I am keen to promote safe and responsible access for walkers, horse riders and where appropriate bikes, with the interests of all parties at heart. I have knowledge of the local area having lived here for 40 years and enjoyed walks and horse riding myself, as well as having a keen interest in the needs of wildlife.
Elizabeth HEPBURN Resigned Aug 2017	Since retiring I have worked with people who have multiple health issues and so have some knowledge of what they may also require to gain good access to their local area. On a personal level I have always appreciated the opportunities that Monmouthshire provides for outdoor leisure activities and would be interested in helping to further develop these in the future
Gwyneth JONES	As an explorer (albeit close to home) I have an interest in signage and information, along with an appreciation of the work that goes into producing it. My family connections and business interests give me some insight into the pleasures and frustrations of various forms of off-road motorcycling; trials, enduro, motocross, etc. where access is frequently a vexed issue.
Philip MUNDELL	I have been a volunteer with Monmouthshire County Council Countryside section for the past nine years. I am particularly proud of my involvement with the Fit4Life scheme and was part of the team that initiated both the Abergavenny and Chepstow groups. I am now an active member of the Chepstow team. I have recently agreed to take on the role of Path Care Officer with Chepstow Walkers are Welcome.
David SMITH	Since my retirement, I have been a rights of way volunteer in the Monmouthshire countryside service. This has involved repairing and maintaining public rights of way, as well as undertaking periodic path condition surveys. I lead guided walks in the Monmouthshire walking

	programme and help with activities such as "Moths and Bats Evenings".
Mark STOREY	Local resident, living in the Wye Valley AONB. Walker cyclist and climber (BMC member). Some familiarity with local rights of way issues and some understanding of the CROW act.
Anne UNDERWOOD (Chair)	A horse rider for most of my life, a volunteer with the British Horse Society to promote and improve access provision for equestrians. A keen walker and explorer of the countryside. Local history, health promotion, yoga.
Ann WEBB	Councillor for Tintern. Appointed as the County Council's representative.

Appendix 2: Future Work Programme

As approved by the new LAF 7 September 2017

Item	Background	Reporting Arrangements
Standard Items:		
<i>Performance Measures</i>	<i>MCC Service Improvement Plan performance measures of CAMS issues (all issues & High priority issues) Available quarterly</i>	<i>Regular report to LAF</i>
<i>Funding</i>	<i>Progress on and opportunities for external funded & MCC capital funded countryside access projects programmes</i>	<i>Regular report to LAF</i>
<i>Consultations</i>	<i>LAF Consultations Report to LAF 7 Sept - Welsh Government White Paper & Herefordshire ROWIP</i>	<i>Report to LAF as required</i>
Working Groups:		
<i>To be determined</i>		<i>Report to LAF as required</i>
Work Programme Items		
<i>Training</i>	<i>To be decided by the new LAF</i>	
<i>Green Paper – Legislation Programme</i>	<i>Response to the Welsh Government White Paper consultation on Sustainable Management of Natural Resources</i>	<i>LAF report 7 Sept 2017</i>
<i>Production of Annual Report</i>	<i>2016 annual report approved in by old LAF 2017/18 annual report will cover period Jan 2017 – Jan 2018</i>	<i>LAF report Jan 2018</i>
<i>Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review</i>	<i>Report on initial consultation and next steps; further update, assessment and consultation reports</i>	<i>LAF 22 May 2017 & subsequent meetings</i>
<i>Mon Lane Care Scheme</i>	<i>Update report required / site visit</i>	<i>LAF report / site visit</i>
<i>Prioritisation System</i>	<i>Task Prioritisation and Definitive Map Modification Order Prioritisation</i>	<i>Report to LAF</i>
<i>New M4</i>	<i>Public inquiry commences 28 February 2017. Inquiry has now adjourned and will 19th September 2017</i>	<i>As required</i>

<i>New Alternative Delivery Model for MCC services</i>	<i>Reported to LAF 22 May 2017 and now pending MCC decision as to preferred option</i>	<i>As required</i>
<i>Highway Records and Claims</i>	<i>Update on policy development</i>	<i>Report to LAF</i>
<i>Volunteering</i>	<i>Position update</i>	<i>Report to LAF</i>
<i>Natural Resources Wales</i>	<i>As required</i>	<i>Report to LAF</i>
<i>Active Travel</i>	<i>Position update</i>	<i>Report to LAF</i>
<i>Walking Product & Websites</i>	<i>Position update</i>	<i>Report to LAF</i>
