

# Monmouthshire

## Local Access Forum

### **AGENDA ITEM: 5**

**SUBJECT: LOWER WYE VALLEY INTEGRATED RECREATION ACCESS STUDY**

**MEETING: MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

**DATE: 3 MAY 2023**

#### **1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To update the Forum on progress with the Lower Wye Valley Integrated Recreation Access Study (IRAS).

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION:**

- 2.1 To note progress

#### **3. BACKGROUND:**

- 3.1 Members will recall previous consideration of these issues regarding the use and condition of the countryside access network with the AONB. In particular the unclassified county road (UCR) network remains a cause of community concern. These issues are complex and relate both to the condition of these routes, generally in very poor condition often linked to water erosion /run off issues from surrounding land, and their use including legal motorised use.
- 3.2 The LAF resolved in December 2021 to support in principle the proposed approach to develop an inclusive user-strategy for all lower Wye UCRs and linked public rights of way, subject to receiving further details.
- 3.3 Since then conversations have continued between the AONB Unit and MCC Highways and Countryside Access and have reaffirmed that a strategic approach is desirable, rather than cherry-picking routes that could prove difficult to justify versus other routes, and/or not actually be what the local communities and users want or need.
- 3.4 It was agreed that the AONB Unit, with its strong multi-sector stakeholder connections, is best placed to lead this new strategy, which will incorporate MCC's statutory requirements as the Public Rights of Way and Highways Authority, but also consider the effects of climate change, nature recovery, heritage, tourism and active travel agendas, and the context of the AONB Management Plan.
- 3.5 The AONB Unit has secured funding from the Welsh Government (WG) Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places (SLSP) programme to take this forward up to March 2025.

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- 3.6 The intention is to engage consultants with relevant experience both of countryside access networks and facilitation / consensus building to support a process of consultation with all interested parties. The AONB unit is currently developing an invitation to tender which will be issued at the end of April.
- 3.7 It is hoped to appoint suitable consultants and commence the project in mid to late June 2023 and this should provide an opportunity for a more detailed briefing at the next meeting on 11 July. LAF members will also be invited to participate in the planned consultations events / activities.

**4. AUTHOR:**

Matthew Lewis

LAF Secretary [matthewlewis@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthewlewis@monmouthshire.gov.uk) 01633 644855