

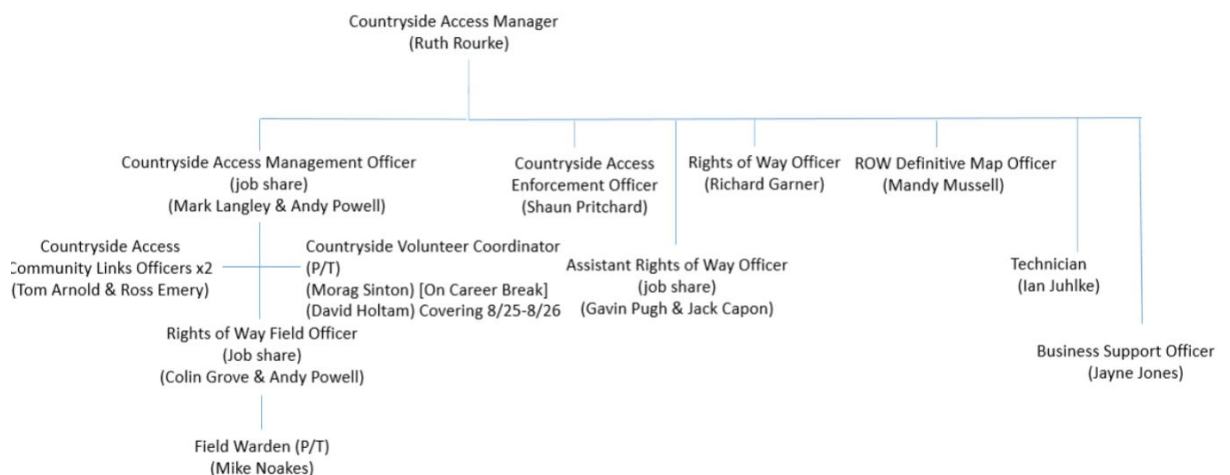
MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

February 2025

Countryside Access Service Update by Countryside Access Manager

Staff changes

- Colette Bosley has taken over from Matthew Lewis as Countryside, Destination and Environment Manager.
- Ross Emery is the new Community Links Officer. This role is paid from Access Improvement Grant and will work with Tom Arnold to facilitate doorstep opportunities, including improving and promoting access for all. It is a temporary role until 31st March 2027. Sam Clark is starting on 28th January 2026 as temporary Field Warden.
- David Holtam has filled the temporary Volunteer Co-ordinator post.
- Mark Langley who has been working three days a week as the team leader for maintenance has retired. The role has been taken on fulltime, by his job share colleague, Andrew Powell.
- Colin Grove has now gone up to 4 days as Field Officer taking on the additional day from Andrew Powell.
- The Council is restructuring and Countryside Access is moving to a new Directorate called Place, Communities and Well-being. Craig O'Connor has been appointed Chief Operating Officer.



Budget

The draft revenue and capital budget proposals for 2026/27 are to commence a period of consultation for four weeks ending 18th February 2026 with

Face to face and virtual engagement events – Countywide and targeted

- Special budget page on Council website
- Online survey and social media campaign
- Council scrutiny meetings – Jan-Feb 2026

Further information on consultation events will be made available on the Council website [here](#), along with ways for people to engage in and respond during the consultation process. The Council is recommending £352,000 in Capital for public rights of way.

Legislative changes

The Visitor Levy has received Royal Assent. The new law gives councils across Wales the choice to introduce a visitor levy in their area – “a small contribution from overnight guests that will support local tourism and protect what makes each destination special”. The earliest this could happen is 2007. Councils will consult local communities and businesses before making any decision about introducing a visitor levy.

To support this change, the new law also requires anyone charging visitors for overnight stays in Wales to register with the Welsh Revenue Authority. Visitor accommodation providers must register with the Welsh Revenue Authority regardless of whether their council introduces a visitor levy. Registration opens in autumn 2026.

The Welsh Revenue Authority has published [new guidance](#).

Countryside Sites

Consultants have been engaged to improve and provide gateway opportunities at Clydach Ironworks. Part of the project will include the opportunity for a public consultation on how local people would like to be involved and what improvements they would like to see. The LAF can be involved with this in conjunction with BBNP LAF.

Specialist contractors are also working to consolidate and make safe the ironworks.

Public Right of Way Maintenance

Storm Claudia. Staff have been out checking the network. Paths within Monmouth Town are being cleansed (photo is of Chippenham Fields path). The stone to dust path at Drybridge will need repairs and stiles/fencing and surfacing has been an issue along the Monnow at Skenfrith. There have also been reported localised incidents of damage. There is significant debris around some of the bridges that will need to be cleared such as can be seen here at Oldcastle.



It will take some time for all issues to be reported but the current damage is estimated at £8-10,000 for public rights of way. The Council continues to provide support to residents affected and a donation page has been set up to help with on-going support.

The impacts on the Countryside Access service have been:

- through assisting emergency planning and on-going response,
 - a limited response to other cases due to the need to check the network particularly along the Monnow and to arrange for necessary repairs.
- Impact on staff living in Monmouth has left the team short staffed and reduced ability to manage volunteer & grants programme.

Bridge closures

The following bridges have been closed by formal order. Some are new closures and some closures are already in place but being extended. The reason for the closures is because of the likelihood of danger to the public.

Public Footpaths 374(part), 213(part) & 207(part) Mitchel Troy United. Footpath 25(part), Mathern, Footpaths 2(part) & 32(part) Llantrisant Fawr, Footpaths 86(part), 85(part) & 55(part) Raglan United, Footpaths 51(part) & 17(part) Llangwm, Footpaths 444(part), Llanfiangel Crucorney, Footpath 204(part) Grosmont, Footpaths 222(part) & 294(part), Llangattock-Vibon-Avel United, Footpath 57(part) Gwehelog Fawr, Footpath 73(part) Llanarth Fawr, Footpath 52(part) Llanbadoc Fawr and Footpath 99(part), Devauden

Last year there was 50% more closures, but some bridges have been replaced and some removed. Additionally new bridges have been identified as being unsafe.

National Forest Trail

The National Forest in Wales now covers the equivalent of over 90,000 rugby pitches. It is led by Welsh Government and will create a network of woodlands and forests throughout Wales, under high quality management.

The development of a National Forest Trail is an ambitious aim for Wales to be one of the first nations to have a national wood walk. The trail will stretch the length and breadth of Wales. It is an early stage of development and will be a significant long-term project.

The National Forest Trail will showcase the wide variety of National Forest for Wales sites and improve connectivity between them. Access to woodlands and forests is

proven to bring multiple social, economic and environmental benefits, so the Forest Trail is seen as playing a key role to maximise these opportunities. A pilot study is currently being held through deprived areas such as Methyr, linking to the waterfalls in Brecon Beacons.

There is currently no connection within Monmouthshire, and we await information from the trial to see how the route may develop and link here.

Countryside Code 75th Birthday

The Countryside Code was first published on 11th May 1951 as part of the post-war social welfare reforms. NRW and Natural England have a duty to issue and from time to time revise a code of conduct for outdoor recreation, which is done by the promotion of the countryside code. With the upcoming anniversary there is opportunity to reflect on what is good, and what could be improved in the promotion of the countryside code. The results of a recent stakeholder survey show that few people in Wales know about or care about the code.



A Subgroup of the National Access Forum Wales Group is being established to consider relevant action. If you should have any innovative solutions/ideas, please let Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Team know so they can be passed on to this subgroup to consider.

National Infrastructure Project- NSIP Solar Scheme

We have received a pre-consultation letter for the proposed NSIP Solar Scheme on the Gwent Levels (south of Llanwern Steelworks). The scheme spans Monmouthshire and Newport and aims to deliver around 380 MW of renewable electricity annually. We don't have much information yet, but here is the letter and a link to [the scheme's website](#).

Initially from our perspective, the obvious points are:

- It affects the Wales Coast Path and an ongoing grant and project to improve links to the WCP.
- There are considerable environmental considerations that will need input.
- Two footpaths in Newport are proposed for diversion.

This is a matter which the LAF may wish to consider once further information is available. However, comments can be made individually at this stage on the planning portal to reference DC/2025/01574

Wales Coast Path

King Charles III England Coast Path is planned to be opened in Summer 2026. Natural England are keen that an opening celebrates the start and finish of the English and Welsh Coast Paths and to promote links. Discussions have started and

details will be shared when known. Any ideas for the celebrations please get in touch with the Countryside Access Team.

With over 10,500 Facebook members, it's the perfect place to pick up some practical hints and tips on walking the path along with plenty of inspiration and encouragement from fellow path walkers [Facebook: Wales Coast Path Community / Cymuned Llwybr Arfordir Cymru](#)

NEW! Winter range is now out! ❁

Layer up and head out in warm cosy coats, new hats and gloves to keep you walking on the path this winter.

Consultations

Welsh Government have published a consultation on the third revision to Active Travel Guidance. Read more on this on gov.wales

Useful information

[Read more about the Countryside Code](#)

Be adventure SMART [Read how to be more prepared before heading out onto the path](#)

Public Rights of Way Working Map [Public Rights of Way - Public Rights of Way Map](#)
[Countryside Access Improvement Plan](#)

[Countryside Access Policy, Protocol and Operational Management Guide](#)

[Monmouthshire PROW Biodiversity Action Plan](#)

[Visit Monmouthshire](#) details the walks, rides and events that are available, along with accommodation and other attractions.

[Public Consultations including Public Path Orders](#)

To report a problem, use our interactive working map link above. Alternatively, you can email countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk or write to

Countryside Access, Monmouthshire County Council, County Hall. The Rhydyr, Usk NP161GA

Urgent issues such as a broken bridge can be reported on 01633 644850.