

MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 27th September 2016 at 1:00pm
The Learning Room, Shire Hall, Monmouth

PRESENT:

Members:

Mr Richard Davies	Chair	RD
Mr John Askew		JA
Mrs Joanne Bolwell		JB
Mrs Irene Brooke		IB
Mrs Stella Collard		SC
Mrs Anne Underwood		AU

MCC	Mr Matthew Lewis	ML
MCC Highways Network	Mr Paul Keeble	PK
NRW	Mrs Gill Bilsborough	GB
Minute Secretary:	Alan Clarke	AC

Observers: **Anthea Fairey**
Gwyneth Jones
Philip Mundell

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Pat Belsten, Christian Schmidt, Ruth Rourke, Cllr Ann Webb, Cllr Phil Hobson, Elizabeth Hepburn and David Smith.

2. Introductions

RD welcomed members to the meeting and observers who were attending with a view to joining the next LAF. Introductions were made for the benefit of observers.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th April 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th April 2016 were agreed by those present and signed by the Chairman.

5. Matters Arising

Item 5: Welsh Government Green Paper. **ML** said there had been no indication of progress on the Green Paper from the Welsh Government nor any timescale for the introduction of a Bill.

Item 8: Highway Records Claims. **ML** said he would be bringing this matter back to a future LAF meeting.

6. To Consider the Review of the ROWIP

Members noted the document presented by **ML**. He gave a brief summary of the ROWIP and said the current ROWIP had been approved in 2007. A great deal has changed since then and so it is appropriate that a review is undertaken. Under Welsh Government's Guidelines, the LAF has until October 2017 to carry out the review and then produce a new plan within a further 12 months. The stages were outlined in the appendix to his report. However **ML** said he proposed to carry out a review by July 2017 with the intention of publishing a final plan by March 2018. This timescale would mean that discussion of the ROWIP would form a large part of the LAF's work over the coming meetings.

ML said a part of the consultation process would be to update on how users are currently using the network. **SC** said she has had a lot of feedback from local people that many paths have become blocked. **ML** said the network was very patchy in terms of access. There had been a lot of expenditure, but mainly on major routes. The ROWIP will have to come to some conclusions on how expenditure should be allocated in the future.

RD reminded Members that the current ROWIP document has proved to be robust and has been very useful in helping to obtain funding for projects. This was a vital purpose and needed to be maintained during the forthcoming review.

ML said it was not yet fully clear how the Brecon Beacons would be dealt with, but progress was being made. 85% of the National Park was covered by three local authorities who were now looking to provide a new delegation to the Park Authority which would address the shortcomings of the present arrangement. It is yet to be resolved whether there would be a separate ROWIP for the National Park.

SC asked how the Wye Valley would fit into the ROWIP review. **ML** said there was potential to receive access improvement money for the Wye Valley and he anticipated receiving £40-£50K extra money this year. As time was now short and the winter period was approaching it was planned to spend this year's money on resurfacing the access path behind Chepstow Leisure Centre as this was being continually washed out. Fingerposts along the entire Monmouthshire route will also be replaced. It was possible this funding could become an annual addition to the budget. As part of an AONB access strategy will need to be agreed and this can be used to feed into the ROWIP.

7. To Consider the Draft Annual Report

Members noted the Draft Annual Report. **RD** expressed his thanks to **ML** for drafting it. **ML** said the report followed the same format as last year. He said if Members were happy to approve the report he will then bring it back to the new LAF to agree and include a forward work programme. The Members approved the plan as drafted.

8. To Receive Update Reports

Members noted the report presented by **ML**.

a) Proposed M4 Corridor Scheme

ML said MCC had made detailed comments, including those raised by the LAF, to the Welsh Government. A response has been received which gave clarification and cleared up inaccuracies and were now mostly resolved. He said there had been a meeting to consider the closure timescale of the Mill Reen underpass and this is now receiving further consideration.

PK said MCC had very little time or resources to respond to ongoing changes to the scheme which continued to come through. He said the latest detailed changes had to be responded to by 18th October and he welcomed any assistance LAF Members could contribute. **RD** said the LAF would fully support any responses that MCC makes.

Gill Bilsborough joined the meeting at 2.00pm.

b) Performance Measures

Members noted the Performance Management Information Update table presented by **ML**. He said he would need to extract information from CAMs for a few more quarters before a meaningful picture emerges. However it was somewhat reassuring to see that of 2965 unresolved maintenance issues, only 290 were in the high priority category.

c) Funding

Members noted the current funding position. **ML** said all the schemes in his report were well on target.

d) Active Travel Act

ML said that the Transport Planning and Policy Officer Christian Schmidt, would give a presentation to the new LAF.

e) Mon Lane Care Scheme

PK said progress had not been as rapid as had been hoped. However all landowners had been informed. He said the potential remained for a site visit before the next LAF.

IB said she had encountered nine people all with 4x4's on the proposed Tintern route. They were carrying out clearance work with chainsaws. She described the route as a complete mess and those carrying out the work spoke in a rude manner. She said she doubted if they had official permission to carry out the work and she continues to have grave doubts about the suitability and appropriateness of the route being used by 4x4 vehicles as well as walkers and horse riders.

JS confirmed that whoever had carried out the work, they were not part of Treadlightly. **RD** said an assurance had been given by **PK** that the route was a highway but agreed that the LAF should hold a site visit. **ML** will organise a suitable date.

f) Natural Resources Wales

GB thanked the LAF on behalf of NRW for the invitation to the meeting. She said her office, based at Abergavenny, now had responsibility for the whole of South Wales as far as Pembrokeshire with a remit to promote the sustainable use of the countryside. There had been immense changes in structure over the past three years and these were continuing. A current major piece of legislation to deal with was the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

GB said with 14 LAFs in the area and just 6 staff based at Abergavenny it was a challenge to maintain good liaison. She was currently working with each LAF Chairman to identify the best level of support.

ML said the LAF's main area of concerns was actions taken by NRW and which had affected rights of way but had not been brought in advance to the LAF's attention.

AU said woodland harvesting used to work well but now there is no advanced warning of work being carried out and this needed to be addressed. **IB** cited a case of dredging taking place alongside the Coastal Path and the waste being dumped on the path.

GB said NRW was still a new organisation and agreed that problems still exist. This was part of the ongoing work now being tackled. She thanked the Members for their feedback.

RD thanked **GB** for attending the meeting and looked forward to closer liaison with NRW in the years ahead.

GB left the meeting at 3.15pm.

g) LAF Conference

RD said the next LAF Conference will be held on 19th October 2016. He said the Conference was offering an additional place for each LAF this year. He suggested that one of the prospective members of the new LAF would like to attend. It was agreed that **ML** will write and extend the invitation to all existing and prospective Members.

9. To Receive an Update on the new Local Access Forum

Members noted the report presented by **ML**. He said John Askew, Pat Belsten, Irene Brooke and Ann Underwood had been re-appointed by the MCC Full Council. All other applicants had been short-listed and will be invited to meet a 3-member panel in order to complete the nomination process. Application will then be made for formal approval by the Full Council.

ML said that he will Chair the first meeting of the new LAF and will explain the processes to the Members at that meeting. The second meeting will then appoint a Chair and Deputy Chair, consider terms of reference and whether there is any under-representation of interests on the new LAF.

In future **ML** said, the LAF Chairman would be invite to give a report to MCC's Full Council. This would help to form a direct link and will be useful.

ML said the Full Council had formally recorded their thanks to outgoing Members of the LAF. **RD** also added his thanks.

JB and **SC** left the meeting at 3.40pm.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

ML said he would confirm the date and time of the next meeting once the panel interviews had been completed.

Retiring Chairman's Comments

At the close of the meeting the outgoing Chairman, Richard Davies, said he had thoroughly enjoyed his 10 years as a member of the LAF. He said a great highlight had been the achievement of the Wales Coastal Path and he was delighted with the role Monmouthshire had played for its part of the route. He paid tribute to the efforts made in maintaining the path despite extreme budget cuts. He offered his thanks to all MCC staff and retiring Members of the LAF and extended good wishes to new Members.

The meeting closed at 4.00pm.

Signed as a true record of the proceedings:.....

(Chairman)

Date:.....