

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Minutes of the meeting of Lower Wye Area Committee held at Chepstow Leisure Centre - Chepstow on Wednesday, 22nd January, 2020 at 10.00 am

**PRESENT:** County Councillor D. Dovey (Chair)  
County Councillor A. Webb (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: L.Brown, P. Murphy and A Braund

### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Roger Hoggins	Head of Service - Strategic Projects (Fixed Term)
Judith Langdon	Communities and Partnership Development Lead
Christian Schmidt	Transport Planning and Policy Officer

### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor A. Braund	Chepstow Town Council
Councillor I. Martin	Shirenewton Community Council
Councillor G. Down	Mathern Community Council
Councillor H. Beach	Chepstow Town Council
Councillor P. Farley	St. Arvans Community Council
Mrs S. Dovey	Member of the Public
Mr. S. Cooke-Black	South Wales Argus/Monmouthshire Free Press
Mr. A. Newman	Member of the Public

### APOLOGIES:

County Councillors D. Batrouni, R.J.W. Greenland and P.Pavia

#### **1. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

Newly elected Town Councillor Alan Braund was welcomed to his first meeting.

#### **2. Public Open Forum**

Members of the public were welcomed to the meeting.

#### **3. Rail Update**

The Transport Projects and Programmes Manager provided an update on Rail focusing on the key items of trains, timetables and Chepstow Station, summarised as follows:

- Some refurbished trains are now in service which has led to less cancellations.
- An upgraded service to hourly is needed by 2022. Monmouthshire CC (MCC) is trying to secure an hourly local service as soon as possible, then move to a half hourly service. The vision of a turn up and go service (4 trains an hour) is some time away as there is insufficient demand currently. MCC would welcome opportunities to put details of current demand to Welsh Government and Transport for Wales.

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- There is a Network Rail study into infrastructure on the South West train line. No further information is available yet. Any such studies are welcomed to ensure the optimum use of the lines to manage competing demands for extra services to Bristol, Lydney, Chepstow, Gloucester and Cheltenham.
- The need for trains from Chepstow to Bristol is a priority; at least two trains in the peak morning and peak afternoon periods. It was agreed that there are timetable issues and suggested that they are looked at again.
- It is hoped to establish a Park and Ride facility at Severn Tunnel Junction in the next financial year. Next will be to look to develop parking for Magor, Abergavenny and Chepstow. No land has been purchased as yet, to develop a park and ride facility for Chepstow. It was noted that a new housing development in the vicinity will complicate plans which might involve work on the Tesco junction. Members agreed on the importance of linking bus access to trains. However, concerns were expressed about the potential impact of moving the bus station on businesses in the town centre. It was agreed to forward suggestions about the positioning of bus stops, the comments against moving the bus station, suggestions about use of existing car parks, use of units close to the station, Tesco's land and the Racecourse for further consideration.
- Regarding the station infrastructure, plans to use the disused buildings have been put to Network Rail (Bristol) – no update to report. A joint bid was made for Access for All funding. Whilst Abergavenny Station was successful with regard to its footbridge, unfortunately, Chepstow Station was not. There is a commitment from the new franchise to invest in Chepstow Station but not until 2025. Transport for Wales will work with us to develop the whole project and will resubmit unsuccessful bids to a new UK Government fund. The bid for Chepstow Station will provide an accessible footbridge and lift. It is hoped there will be an answer before the end of March.
- Traffic congestion concerns are shared in Lydney and it would be preferable to have a co-ordinated, unfragmented approach. The removal of the tolls on the Prince of Wales Bridge has significantly impacted on traffic levels. It was agreed that car usage must be reduced. The Chepstow Transport Study will consider all these details at a high level.
- Considering potential sites for park and ride facilities, a member of the public raised concerns about traffic at St. Arvans and Lionsgate roundabout related to use of the racecourse. It was queried who owns the lay by, and agreed that clarification is needed.

#### **4. Progress on Metro**

The Transport Projects and Programmes Manager provided an update that it has been announced, that in the longer term, the Metro will be extended to all routes in South Wales including Chepstow, Maesteg and Ebbw Vale.

Studies on the next phase of the Metro have begun. These will include objectives for the whole Newport to Chepstow Corridor. It is hoped that the authority will be invited to a workshop when draft objectives and options are available.

The Committee agreed it was important that there is wider engagement to hear the views of the public, the authority and Members of the Council.

Monmouthshire County Council will bid for Metro Plus funding to deliver additional Metro projects.

#### **5. Road Issues**

The Head of Service - Strategic Projects (Fixed Term) attended to provide an update on transport issues affecting Chepstow and surrounding area as follows:

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It was reported that Welsh Government had agreed to some additional white lines at High Beech Roundabout before the end of the financial year. In the following financial year a more in depth study will be conducted to consider options for improvement (including those raised by Transition Chepstow). It was confirmed that Monmouthshire County Council will be consulted as some County maintained roads lead onto the roundabout.

Disquiet was expressed about the suggestion to block off Fairview and it was agreed that Welsh Government should speak to elected members about the effects of traffic issues on the whole area. It was explained that part of the Welsh transport appraisal guidance (WelTAG) assessment process will look at options to identify priorities and consultation is a requirement.

It was confirmed that the proposal for Hayes Gate will also be considered as part of the WelTAG Study.

The Committee was reminded that the study is not exclusively focused on road schemes as Welsh Government is committed to reduction of car use. The Stage 1 WelTAG Study is complete and includes three parts for further investigation at Stage 2:

- a) Chepstow By-Pass;
- b) Hayes gate M48 slip road; and
- c) Improvements to public transport.

Monmouthshire County Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Welsh Government, Highways England and the Welsh Office have commissioned Arup to undertake Stage 2 WelTAG.

Arup has also been commissioned to undertake the Newport-Chepstow Corridor Study, plus a study of the two Severn River crossings. This approach will be useful to promote an integrated response.

A reminder will be sent to Welsh Government regarding a previous commitment to review the traffic management (lane management in particular) on the 'Newhouse roundabout' – southern end of the link road from High Beech Roundabout and above the M48. Also, the traffic management on the link road itself was highlighted as requiring revision (subsequent to a fatality some years ago).

It was raised by a Member that the A466 is likely to be closed intermittently, and in sections, in the Spring with traffic lights to optimise opportunities for the road to remain open.

The issue of illegal parking by rock climbers was revisited.

Regarding Mounton Road, it has been reported by officers that public consultation on the three options supported option 3 to retain two-way travel, introduction of traffic calming (speed pads) whilst noting that there is insufficient space to construct a dedicated footpath. The Chair expressed concern that a decision to retain two-way (20mph) travel will prevail due to local interest and that the top end will remain dangerous particularly for children, adults pushing prams etc.

It was confirmed that the authority is working on schemes to improve road safety in Wye Valley villages. The schemes will enhance village environment and also encourage Active Travel. The initiative was welcomed. In response to a comment it was confirmed that there would be better , not more , signage.

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There was no update available in relation to a question regarding a 20mph default in villages and contradictory signs.

#### **6. Road closure and street play training opportunities**

The Community and Partnership Development Lead attended the meeting to explain about the Playing Out scheme to facilitate play friendly communities through temporary road closures to let children play safely and freely in their street. This is aligned to the legislative right of children in Wales to play.

Details of some pilot schemes in the County were provided which included Abergavenny, Sudbrook and Undy. It was explained that good numbers of families took part and there were many benefits, some unexpected that enhanced community engagement including engagement with elderly residents.

In answer to a question about potential barriers, it was explained that residents retain access to their properties but most have been happy to work around the conditions as it is only for a short period of time (e.g. two hours). Volunteer stewards escort residents and their vehicles through the location alerting the children by whistles as necessary. Good feedback has been received from the pilot schemes.

Committee Members were invited to direct interested residents to the team and the website for more information.

Information was shared where large signs prohibiting ball games were erected on a green area that would be ideal for Playing Out. It was explained that work was carried out with the Housing Association involving children from Thornwell Primary School as researchers. The outcome is that the signs are removed.

#### **7. To note the record of the last meeting held on 16th October 2019**

The notes of the last meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019 were confirmed as a true record.

#### **8. Items for the next agenda**

#### **9. To confirm the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 8th April 2020 at 10.00am in Chepstow Leisure Centre**

**The meeting ended at 12.20 pm**