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County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

Date Not Specified

## Notice of meeting Local Access Forum

Tuesday, 19th July, 2022 at 2.30 pm,  
Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK

### AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence / Introductions	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 26 April 2022 (Attached).	1 - 4
4.	Membership update (Secretary)	
5.	Improvement Sub-Group membership (Secretary)	
6.	Natural Resources Wales updates (Bob Campbell, Senior Officer Land Management, South East Wales Operations)	
7.	Countryside Access Improvement Grant Projects and Update (Report Attached)	5 - 10
8.	Gwent Regional Access Group update (meeting on 14 July 2022) (Chair & Members)	
9.	Dates of future meetings.	

**Paul Matthews**

**Chief Executive**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillors: Ann Webb  
Anne Underwood (Chair)  
Irene Brooke (Vice Chair)  
Anthea Fairey  
Shan Lewis  
David Farnsworth  
David Smith  
Tracy Hook  
Gordon Davies  
Jenny Cockitt  
John Askew  
Mark Storey  
Martin Sweeney  
Phil Mundell  
Sheila Hampshire  
Sylvia Fowles

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### **Welsh Language**

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# Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

## Sustainable and Resilient Communities

### Outcomes we are working towards

#### **Nobody Is Left Behind**

- Older people are able to live their good life
- People have access to appropriate and affordable housing
- People have good access and mobility

#### **People Are Confident, Capable and Involved**

- People's lives are not affected by alcohol and drug misuse
- Families are supported
- People feel safe

#### **Our County Thrives**

- Business and enterprise
- People have access to practical and flexible learning
- People protect and enhance the environment

### Our priorities

- Schools
- Protection of vulnerable people
- Supporting Business and Job Creation
- Maintaining locally accessible services

### Our Values

- **Openness:** we aspire to be open and honest to develop trusting relationships.
- **Fairness:** we aspire to provide fair choice, opportunities and experiences and become an organisation built on mutual respect.
- **Flexibility:** we aspire to be flexible in our thinking and action to become an effective and efficient organisation.
- **Teamwork:** we aspire to work together to share our successes and failures by building on our strengths and supporting one another to achieve our goals.

# Nodau a Gwerthoedd Cyngor Sir Fynwy

## Cymunedau Cynaliadwy a Chryf

### Canlyniadau y gweithiwn i'w cyflawni

#### Neb yn cael ei adael ar ôl

- Gall pobl hŷn fyw bywyd da
- Pobl â mynediad i dai addas a fforddiadwy
- Pobl â mynediad a symudedd da

#### Pobl yn hyderus, galluog ac yn cymryd rhan

- Camddefnyddio alcohol a chyffuriau ddim yn effeithio ar fywydau pobl
- Teuluoedd yn cael eu cefnogi
- Pobl yn teimlo'n ddiogel

#### Ein sir yn ffynnu

- Busnes a menter
- Pobl â mynediad i ddysgu ymarferol a hyblyg
- Pobl yn diogelu ac yn cyfoethogi'r amgylchedd

### Ein blaenoriaethau

- Ysgolion
- Diogelu pobl agored i niwed
- Cefnogi busnes a chreu swyddi
- Cynnal gwasanaethau sy'n hygyrch yn lleol

### Ein gwerthoedd

- **Bod yn agored:** anelwn fod yn agored ac onest i ddatblygu perthnasoedd ymddiriedus
- **Tegwch:** anelwn ddarparu dewis teg, cyfleoedd a phrofiadau a dod yn sefydliad a adeiladwyd ar barch un at y llall.
- **Hyblygrwydd:** anelwn fod yn hyblyg yn ein syniadau a'n gweithredoedd i ddod yn sefydliad effeithlon ac effeithiol.
- **Gwaith tîm:** anelwn gydweithio i rannu ein llwyddiannau a'n methiannau drwy adeiladu ar ein cryfderau a chefnogi ein gilydd i gyflawni ein nodau.

## Terms of Reference

Monmouthshire Local Access Forum is the statutory Local Access Forum for Monmouthshire (excluding that part of the county that falls into the Brecon Beacons National Park), as required under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

The function of the Forum is to advise the local authority, Natural Resources Wales and others, as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and to advise and assist with the implementation of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

## Membership

Members of the forum are appointed by the “Appointing Authority” (Monmouthshire County Council in accordance with the relevant regulations. The current membership of the forum is as follows:

Mr John Askew

Mrs Patricia Belsten

Mrs Irene Brooke

Mrs Anthea Fairey

Mrs Sheila Hampshire

Ms Elizabeth Hepburn

Ms Gwyneth Jones

Mr Phil Mundell

Mr David Smith

Mr Mark Storey

Mrs Anne Underwood (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Ann Webb (the “Appointing Authority” representative)

Observers;

Representatives from Monmouthshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales



# Agenda Item 3

**MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**  
**Minutes of the meeting held at Caldicot Castle on**  
**Tuesday 26 April 2022 at 2:15pm**

**PRESENT:**

**Members:**

<b>John Askew</b>	<b>JA</b>
<b>Irene Brooke (Deputy Chair)</b>	<b>IB</b>
<b>Sylvia Fowles</b>	<b>SF</b>
<b>Shan Lewis</b>	<b>SL</b>
<b>David Smith</b>	<b>DS</b>
<b>Mark Storey</b>	<b>MS</b>
<b>Anne Underwood (Chair)</b>	<b>AU</b>

**MCC:**

**Matthew Lewis**

(LAF Secretary) Environment & Culture Manager, MonLife **ML**

**Ruth Rourke** Countryside Access Manager, MonLife **RR**

**Richard Garner** Gwent Green Grid Regional Access Officer **RG**

**Denzil Turbervill** Commercial Solicitor, MCC **DT**

**Richard Ray** Paralegal, MCC **RR**

**NRW:**

**Sarah Tindal** Natural Resources Wales **ST**

## **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from members: Anthea Fairey, Sheila Hampshire, Phil Mundell, Martin Sweeney and Ann Webb. It was also noted that Paul Keeble, MCC Highways and Bob Campbell, NRW have also sent their apologies.

**AU** welcomed members to the first face to face meeting of the current LAF. The Chair also introduced Maxine Watson-Whittaker who was attending as an observer having been recently appointed by the British Horse Society as an access volunteer in Newport. Members and observers introduced themselves.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 6 December 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of 6 December 2021 were considered and **IB** proposed an amendment in respect of the item 5 so the agreed action read “The LAF supports 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*”. With this amendment the minutes were proposed by **MS**, seconded by **DS** and approved as a correct record. The need for a consequential amendment to the draft annual report was noted.

The Chair agreed to take Agenda Item 6 (Gwent Regional Access Group) first:

#### **4. Gwent Regional Access Group**

**RG** explained the background to the establishment of a Gwent Regional Access Group. The Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP) is a collaborative project funded through Welsh Government’s RDP ENRaW programme developing and delivering a common approach to managing green infrastructure, including the countryside access network. The programme strands include preparing a strategic access plan identifying missing links and areas where improvements are needed in the countryside access network, planning, and delivering improvements to support community well-being. To assist this process a Gwent Regional Access Group is being established. Membership will be made up of the local access forums. Each area will be able to put forward 2 to 4 representatives. It is hoped the group will advise on access projects and the strategic access plan and become part of the legacy of the GGGP programme to help coordinate access improvements and support future strategic funding bids. **SL** asked about the group’s practical aims. **RG** advised it would help advise on practical improvements being funded by the programme, help the creation of strategic plan and help develop a long-term vision for improvements across Gwent. **AU** noted there was considerable variation in recorded rights of way across local authorities. **SF** asked if the aim was to encourage more Gwent wide promoted routes. **RG & RR** indicated that there was an open mind on this, that would depend on how the process developed but certainty could include looking at missing links and possibly re-promoting longer routes such as the Usk Valley Walk.

**Agreed** The following members volunteered and were nominated to represent the LAF on the regional group: Anne Underwood; Shan Lewis and David Smith

#### **5. Membership Update**

The Secretary reported that David Farnsworth had tendered his resignation.

#### **6. Staffing Update and LAF Secretary Role**

The Secretary updated members on the creation of a new permanent Community Links Officer post as an addition to the Countryside Access Team. The post will enable and support community involvement. It will lead on working with volunteers, local path care groups, friends groups, Community Councils and others to facilitate volunteer and community input to help resolve outstanding issues, especially those issues that will not otherwise be addressed. The post has now closed and a number



of applications have been received. It was noted that unfortunately the temporary Public Rights of Way Officer post advertised at the same time had attracted no applications and so will now be readvertised. Should that post be filled it is intended it will take over the role of LAF Secretary.

## 7. Review / discussion on the forum's purpose and future work programme

As this was the first face to face meeting **AU** invited members to reflect on the LAF's role and how it might best plan its future work programme. **SL** supported being more proactive to promote local access in communities, including supporting the role of community councils. **AU** suggested there could be subgroups to look at this, and to encourage greater collaboration in the management of Wentwood.

**RR** outlined how the former user group had worked and suggested a subgroup to help focus the countryside access team's work with communities and support the new community links post would be helpful. Such a group could assist in targeting grant supported work and also feed into the wider regional discussions. The group could if felt appropriate draw in wider representation. **IB** supported any approach that would help break the cycle of locally reported issues important to local communities not being dealt with as they were afforded a lower priority rating. The role of volunteers, both organised and unofficial was discussed.

A number of potential work items were identified. Following discussion, the Secretary summarised the resulting future work programme which would be included in Appendix 2 to the annual report:

Item	Background
<b>Standard Items:</b>	
Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP)	Progress in implementing the approved CAIP
Performance Measures	MonLife Delivery Plan performance measures of CAMS issues (all issues & High priority issues) Available quarterly
Funding	Progress on and opportunities for external funded & MCC capital funded countryside access projects programmes
Consultations	Consultations to the LAF on relevant matters as required
Natural Resource Wales (NRW) updates	Update on forestry operations and access related issues
<b>Working Groups:</b>	
Improvement subgroup (Proposed)	To be established to support working with local communities to identify future improvements
Wentwood subgroup (Proposed)	To seek to re-establish liaison arrangements in respect of Wentwood (with forestry managers and Newport CC)
Gwent Access Group	To participate in the regional access group
<b>Work Programme Items</b>	
Definitive Map Modification Order (DDMO) Claims	To review the number of claims and their prioritisation
Welsh Government Access Reform	To receive any updates on progress on the access reforms
Wye Valley Unclassified County Roads (UCRs)	To consider the development of an inclusive user-strategy for all lower Wye unclassified county roads and related countryside access network

Forest Resource Plans	To participate in the consultation on Natural Resource Wales (NRW) Wye Valley South Forest Resource Plan
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**ST** provided an update on the proposed consultation on forest resource planning which had been pushed back to June. The method by which the LAF would wish to be consulted was discussed and it was agreed that NRW would give this further consideration before making a proposal.

**Agreed**

- a) The forum will establish an improvement subgroup to support working with local communities to identify future improvements
- b) Subject to consultation with Newport CC and other key partners to seek to establish a Wentwood subgroup to re-establish liaison arrangements in respect of Wentwood Forest.
- c) The draft future work programme, as above, for inclusion in the annual report
- d) NRW will consider the most appropriate mechanism for the forum’s engagement in the consultation on Forest Resource Plans

**8. Annual report 2020/21**

The Secretary presented the draft annual report prepared by the appointing authority to cover the first year of this forum’s activity.

**Agreed** the annual report was approved for publication subject to inclusion of the consequential amendment from the amendment to the last meeting’s minutes (as item 3) and inclusion of the forward work programme as agreed under the previous item.

**9. Dates and timing of future meetings.**

The forum agreed that the Secretary will endeavour to arrange the next meeting in July, followed by meetings in Oct 2022 and Jan 2023.

**AU** thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 16:10 pm.

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

(Chair)

Date: .....

## Monmouthshire Local Access Forum

### **AGENDA ITEM: 7**

**SUBJECT: COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROJECTS AND UPDATE**

**MEETING: MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

**DATE: 19 JULY 2022**

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

- 1.1 To update the Forum on changes to the Countryside Access team and related matters.
- 1.2 To bring to the attention of the Local Access Forum changes to the Welsh Government's Access Improvement Grant and to advise members on potential projects for 2022 – 25.

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

- 2.1 To approve the Access Improvement Grant projects as proposed

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

- 3.1 Interviews have now taken place and a Community Links Officer has been appointed and is expected to start on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022. This is a new, full time post established to enable community volunteering. The post holder will lead on working with volunteers, local path care groups, friends groups, community councils and others to help facilitate volunteer and community input to resolving outstanding issues. The post will support both practical volunteer and community tasks and facilitate groups independent involvement. To support this role a community links project is proposed within the 2022-25 Access Improvement Grant.
- 3.2 The aim of the Welsh Government's Access Improvement Grant (AIG) is to support improving access to/on the Public Rights of Way network, open access land, green and blue space in Wales. It was established in 2020-2021 providing funding to local authorities (and Pembrokeshire and Brecon Beacons National Park Authorities). A further £5.6 million has been allocated in 2022-2025 to enable these improvements to continue.
- 3.3 The budget is allocated to authorities via a formula, based on length of Public Rights of Way, total access land and population. In Monmouthshire this amounts to an allocation of £65,128 in 2022-2023 and £80,775 in the years 2023-2025.  
The funding can be used to support projects in the following areas:
  - PF1 Physical improvements to existing routes (e.g. surface, furniture)

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- PF2 Improvements to information and promotion (e.g. signage, way marking, leaflets, panels)
- PF3 Improvements to access/egress points to open access land and green space
- PF4 Improvements to accessing water for water related recreation (e.g. access/egress points, new signage/information, wash down facilities)
- PF5 Increasing under-represented groups' access to the outdoors (e.g. accessibility improvements, information)

3.4 Two funding conditions have come into existence from 2023-24:

- the existence of a fully functioning Local Access Forum
- authorities must have a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) in place (fully signed off/approved by respective cabinets)

3.5 Funding allocations will be reduced by 25% for each element – so if an authority is non-compliant on both then their allocation will be reduced by 50%. Any savings will be reallocated to other authorities. Monmouthshire County Council is compliant with both conditions.

3.6 The projects that Monmouthshire has currently proposed have been submitted to Welsh Government in draft form. All of the projects relate to Monmouthshire's Well-Being Plan and Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan, as well as other national and local policies and plans.

3.7 The projects are as outlined in the table below:-

<b>Title</b>	<b>Supporting Area</b>	<b>2022-23 £</b>	<b>2023-2024 £</b>	<b>2024-2025 £</b>
Bridges (to review, repair and replace a minimum of 5 bridges annually on a rolling programme)	PF1 & 5	20,000	30,000	30,000
Stile changes To reduce the number of stile issues on the prow network by purchasing gates to be used where permission is given by landowner	PF1 & 5	10,000	20,000	20,000
Community Links  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide materials for local community volunteer groups to improve public rights of way and green spaces particularly items such as signage and to help promote access opportunities.</li> <li>• To develop and provide training materials such as videos to assist</li> </ul>	PF1 & PF2	16,000	15,000	15,000

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<p>landowners and community volunteer groups understand responsibilities and enable them to be actively engaged with maintenance and promotion of their access networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To review pathcare and health routes, consider priority areas for new circular routes and development of promotional material. (Note this may be taken out and delivered in house)</li> <li>• To produce videos of at least 2 routes, or Countryside Sites a year, to show what users can expect from surfacing, gradients etc)</li> </ul>				
<p>Rogiet Countryside Park The removal of wet and uneven areas with a stone dust finished pathway building on previous works creating a pathway suitable for the national organisation 'parkrun' to participate their runs every Saturday and Sunday all year round. Proposed changing of kissing gate to a more user friendly entrance. The site will also become fully accessible for those with mobility issues, being suitable for mobility scooters, wheelchairs and also pushchairs around the site</p>	PF1 & PF5	15,000		
<p>Safer routes to school - Shirenewton A short section of path becomes very muddy during the winter, this will benefit greatly from a new tarmac surface. This would allow for a much improved off road route to school for the children of Shirenewton Primary school whilst also improving the footpath for the wider community.</p>	PF1 & PF5	9,128	0	0
<p>Three Castles (Grosmont, Skenfrith and White Castle)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2022-23 To use volunteers to survey circular routes to make up 6 routes (2 per castle) to link in with the Three Castles Walk these can be</li> </ul>	PF2, PF1	500	20,000	20,000

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<p>walked individually or as a combination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023-24 Implement any works identified from the surveys</li> <li>• 2023 -25 To appoint a consultant to provide promotional material and events to re-promote the Three Castles Walk to targeted audiences. Also to create a walking app that helps people make active travel choices or with a health element. (Note This to be confirmed as relies on availability of information from other service areas and potential on going costs) This links with Community Links officer project also</li> <li>• 2022-23 To purchase and waymark these circular routes. Path to be relaunched by public event in 2024/25</li> <li>• 2023- 25 To set up a “Friends of Three Castles Walk” to actively promote the route, link to business opportunities locally and support maintenance of the route.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>BlackRock Car Park Links</b> Improve access from the Car Park to link to the viewing platforms, picnic benches and the Wales Coast Path primarily for those with mobility issues. These improvements would also aid the fishermen who use the car park to gain access to the water’s edge.</p>	<p>PF1 PF3: PF4: PF5:</p>		<p>10,000</p>	
<p><b>Ponds at Castle Meadows</b> Improve access to the pond on Castle Meadows. This would allow for greater access for school groups and those with mobility issues to carry out pond dipping exercises.</p>	<p>PF1: PF4: PF5:</p>	<p>£5000</p>		

3.8 In addition to AIG the Wye Valley AONB unit can make applications under Welsh Government’s Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) grant which supports, amongst other themes, sustainable tourism. This can include complementary access improvements where meeting specific needs.

3.9 The AONB unit’s bid, as with the AIG also over three years, includes Lower Wye Valley Tourism & Access Improvements:

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- Wye Valley Walk enhancements - at Wyesham & within the Piercefield estate to make the path safer and more convenient for users
- Integrated Access Strategy - Support to manage the necessary engagement and consultation, and the preparation of an integrated countryside access strategy in the Monmouthshire part of the Lower Wye Valley as discussed at previous LAF meetings.

3.10 The proposed projects are under discussion with Welsh Government and if approved will be the subject of further reports to the forum.

#### 4. **AUTHOR:**

Ruth Rourke, Countryside Access Manager  
[ruthrourke@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:ruthrourke@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

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