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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Date Not Specified

Notice of meeting Local Access Forum

Wednesday, 3rd May, 2023 at 2.00 pm,
Natural Resources Wales (Monmouth Office), Hadnock Road, Monmouth
NP25 3NQ

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 January 2023	1 - 4
4.	Countryside Access Improvement Plan Delivery (Presentation by Ruth Rourke, Countryside Access Manager)	
5.	Lower Wye Valley Integrated Recreational Access Strategy	5 - 6
6.	Natural Resources Wales updates (Bob Campbell, Senior Officer Land Management, South East Wales Operations)	
7.	Draft Annual Report 22 / 23	7 - 18
8.	Dates of next meetings 2.00pm on Tuesday 11 th July 2023 2.00pm on Thursday 9th November 2023 Venues to be confirmed	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillors: Ben Callard
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

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

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Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

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

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 3

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at Room P4 - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 26th January, 2023
at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: A. Underwood (Chair)

A.Fairey, J. Cockitt, S. Fowles, S. Hampshire, T. Hook, I.Brooke,
S. Lewis, P. Mundell, D. Smith, M. Storey
County Councillor Ben Callard,

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Tom Arnold	Community Links Officer, Countryside Access
Robert Campbell	Natural Resources Wales
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Richard Ray	Paralegal
Ruth Rourke	Countryside Access Manager
Sarah Tindal	Natural Resources Wales

1. Apologies for Absence/Introductions

Apologies were received from members: John Askew and Martin Sweeney. It was also noted that Paul Keeble, MCC had sent their apologies. **AU** welcomed members to the meeting. 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 19th July 2022

The minutes of the meeting of 19 July 2022 were accepted (proposed by **PM** and seconded by **BC**).

4. Community Links: Progress Report

TA introduced himself and gave a presentation on his work to date, in supporting community volunteering. This included supporting existing groups and volunteers as well as providing opportunities for new groups to develop.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at Room P4 - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 26th January, 2023
at 2.00 pm**

PM asked about training and **TA** indicated training included generic training on rights of way law, landowner consent etc. and more detailed training on identifying paths, surveying, safety etc. More in depth training would be provided for leaders, for example on risk assessment, the aim being to equip groups to be self-supported. **PM** also asked about equipment and **RER** indicated that a stock of equipment was being built up and individual conversations taking place with groups about the tools they could use. In response to further questions, re first aid training, **RER** confirmed that this was available, and regarding biosecurity **RER** confirmed this was included especially in respect to bird flu. **RC** referred to NRW's existing biosecurity guidance.

Members discussed the demographics of volunteers and **TA** advised that it was still predominately older volunteers but that conversations were underway including with Flying Start regarding a Dad's group to widen the demographics. **RER** indicated discussions with MonLife's youth and outdoor services were ongoing to increase the capacity to support wider volunteering.

PM raised the issue of the flow of information between groups and the access team, **RER** indicated that recent changes to CAMS had hopefully improved this and it was recognised that a two-way flow of information was essential to enable and record volunteer work.

AU commented that this was good progress and had the potential to attract local funding. **RER** agreed and part of this new approach was passing local survey information back to Community Councils and being more realistic about timescales and improving communications.

PM asked if an updated countryside access team structure could be circulated (subsequently sent to LAF members).

The proposed terms of reference for the improvement sub group were agreed and further suggestions for membership of the group were invited.

AU raised the linked proposal to establish a Wentwood sub group. **RC** indicated that a new Wentwood Streeting Group was in the process of being re-established with representation from the Police, Monmouthshire CC, Newport CC, Woodland Trust, NRW and Tilhill Forestry. It was intended that once the group had recommenced it would expand to include LAF / community representation.

5. Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP) - Green Corridors Strategic Access Plan

The progress on the Gwent Green Grid Partnership regional access strategy was noted.

6. Natural Resources Wales updates (Bob Campbell, Senior Officer Land Management, South East Wales Operations)

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held at Room P4 - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 26th January, 2023 at 2.00 pm

RC provided an update of NRW's land management and forest operations. There had been some staff changes in the local team: Tim Jeffery is the new senior officer for the area. Ioan Williams is standing in as our Land & Asset Manager and a new biodiversity officer is in place for 2 years, Elenor Yoxall.

Other updates included investment in the Whitestone natural playground in the spring and working with key stakeholders to improve access within Wentwood. Work to address Ash dieback is continuing across the area and a large amount of Birch has been removed from the Beacon Hill area as part of a Heathland restoration project.

The relevant Forest Resource Plans can be accessed on line (written update with links subsequently circulated). **RC** is happy to tailor future updates to meet the LAF's information needs.

A discussion ensued on the continuing issues of off road motorbike use and the importance of reporting issues. **AU** suggested that the process needs further explanation / public feedback after specific operations to encourage ongoing reporting.

7. NRW Access Reform Programme Briefing Note December 2022

8. Future work programme / Date of next meeting

The secretary presented the proposed work programme for the remaining meetings of the LAF's current term, which was agreed.

The forum agreed that the Secretary will endeavour to arrange the next meeting in April, potentially at NRW's Monmouth offices

AU thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 16:15pm.

The meeting ended at 4.15 pm

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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 01633 644855



NEW PHOTO REQUIRED



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Version Control

Title	Monmouthshire Local Access Forum Annual Report
Purpose	Annual Report 22/23
Owner	Local Access Forum
Approved by	Draft for LAF 3 May 2023
Date	18/04/23
Version Number	0.1
Status	Draft

Published in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001 by the Appointing Authority, Monmouthshire County Council, on behalf of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum.

Chair's Foreword

This Report covers the second year of the current Forum from 26 April 2022.

I am the elected Chair, and my Deputy is Irene Brookes. Our Secretary is Matthew Lewis, Environment and Culture Manager, MonLife and meetings are attended by Ruth Rourke, Countryside Access Manager, Paul Keeble, Group Engineer Highways and Flood Management and observers from Natural Resources Wales.

Details of our workload for the year are set out in the Review below. Thankfully this year the Local Access Forum has been able to return to face to face meetings following the disruption of the Covid 19 pandemic. This a very welcome return and allows the forum to operate more effectively.

It is pleasing to see very good attendance of members at our meetings and I very much appreciate the contribution made by all the members and their wide range of knowledge and experience.

Anne Underwood, Chair

Secretary's Report

This report marks the completion of the second year of the current LAF from its meeting on 26 April 2022 to January 2023.

During the period one member resigned but the forum has continued to operate with membership above the statutory minimum. The appointing authority's representative changed as a result of the local elections in May 2022. Councillor Ben Callard replaced Cllr Ann Webb as the authority's nominated representative on the forum.

The provisions of The Countryside Access (Local Access Forum) (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020, which allowed for virtual meetings, came to an end on 31 December 2021 necessitating a return to face to face meetings.

Subsequent meetings on 26 April 2022, 19 July 2022 and 26 Jan 2023 have all been held face to face, with public agendas available on the Council's web site.

The LAF members continue to contribute to the resolution and development of countryside access issues and policy in Monmouthshire. We are very grateful for their voluntary input and for the experience and advice they provide and their commitment to the work of the forum.

The forum has been supported through the continuing commitment of officers from Natural Resource Wales, and across countryside access, highway, and legal teams with Monmouthshire County Council.

Matthew Lewis, Secretary

The Year reviewed

These are some of the issues where the LAF have advised and been consulted: -

1. Countryside Access Improvement Plan

The forum has received updates on progress in implementing the Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP) including staffing changes, partnership arrangements and grant / project delivery. The LAF received an update on the work of the new Community Links Officer and how this was supporting community volunteering, working with local path care groups, community councils and others. The LAF supported the identification of resources from the Countryside Access Improvement Grant to support this work.

The LAF identified the need for an improvement sub group to help support the implementation of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan and has agreed terms of reference for this new group.

The LAF has supported and participated in regional partnership working under the Gwent Green Grid Programme to help develop a common approach to access management and identify strategic improvements to the access network across Greater Gwent.

2. Natural Resources Wales

Natural Resources Wales have provided regular updates on land management and forestry operations of interest to the forum. The forum has appreciated this approach and the information provided and questions answered.

3. Consultations

The forum members contributed to a response to Welsh Government's outline proposals for the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Members were concerned that the exclusion of maintenance of existing rights of way as a mandatory requirement would undermine the scheme objectives and that the proposals lacked clear and effective consultation arrangements with local authority rights of way teams and the local access forum.

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Work Carried Out in 2022/23

No	Item	On work programme or additional	When Done
	Membership		
1.	Future work programme and sub groups	Yes	26 April 2022 & 26 January 2023
	Terms of Reference Improvement sub group		26 January 2023
	Membership update	Additional	19 July 2022
	Countryside Access Improvement Plan		
2	Countryside Access improvement Grant projects and update	Yes	19 July 2022
	Partnership Working: Gwent Green Grid Partnership		26 April 2022, 19 July 2022 & 26 January 2023
	Community Links programme		26 January 2023
	Staffing, CAIP delivery and issues		26 April 2022
	Consultations		
3.	Sustainable Farming Scheme outline proposals (Welsh Government)	Additional	November 2022
	Other matters		
4.	Annual Report 20/21	Yes	26 April 2022
	Natural Resources Wales updates		19 July 2022 & 26 January 2023

Future Work Programme

The future work programme for the remaining meetings of the current forum (in May, July, and November 2023) was discussed and agreed at the 26 January 2023 meeting and is appended (Appendix 2).

The current forum member's period of office (3 years from the first meeting) expires on 24 November 2023 and so arrangements will be put in hand during the summer to start the recruitment of a new forum.

Role of the Forum

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities and National Parks, to establish Local Access Forums (LAFs). These forums advise Natural Resources Wales (NRW), local authorities and National Park authorities on ways in which local access can be improved.

The statutory purpose of LAFs is to advise on the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area in which they are established. LAF's must have regard to the needs of land management, natural beauty, flora, fauna, and geological and physiographical features.

The following bodies must have regard to any relevant advice given by the LAF: National Park authority, the highway authority, Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and, for matters relating to defence or security, the Secretary of State.

The forums must have a balance between:

- Users of access land and local rights of way; and
- Landowners and occupiers of access land and land with rights of way.

People with other interests especially relevant to the area will also be represented.

The Regulations specify there should be between 12 and 22 members, including the Chair and the Deputy. In addition, the Chair may invite other individuals and organisations to observe and give advice.

Members are appointed by the Appointing Authority the local Highway Authority or National Park Authority. Monmouthshire County Council is the appointing authority for the Monmouthshire LAF which covers the administrative County of Monmouthshire outside the boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It includes the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Beauty within the county.

Within the area there are Registered Commons and 1657 Kilometres of registered Public Rights of Way. There is in addition a substantial length of County Unclassified Roads, the responsibility of the Highway Section, many of which are un-surfaced.

Monmouthshire County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority have a Delegated Responsibility Agreement covering most aspects of the management of Public Rights of Way within the National Park.

Contacts

Monmouthshire LAF Secretary

Matthew Lewis
Environment and Culture Manager
MonLife
Monmouthshire County Council
County Hall, The Rhadyr
Usk NP15 1GA

Tel: 01633 644855

Email: countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk

More details on the Monmouthshire LAF are available at [Monmouthshire Local Access Forum \(LAF\) - MonLife](#)

This includes link to the LAF agendas, reports and minutes on the Council's meetings calendar under the appropriate dates [Committee details - Local Access Forum \(monmouthshire.gov.uk\)](#) If not available please contact the Secretary.

Appendix 1: Forum Membership

a) 2020/21 Membership (to 24 November 2023)

NAME	INTERESTS
Anne Underwood – (Chair)	Walking and horse-riding
Irene Brooke – (Vice chair)	Landowner and business representative
John Askew	Vehicular and motorised users
Councillor Ben Callard	Monmouthshire County Council representative
Jenny Cockitt	Landowner, natural environment
Gordon Davies	Walking, education and young people's access
Anthea Fairey	Chair of Friends of Castle Meadows
Sylvia Fowles	Disabled Riding, conservation & history
Sheila Hampshire	Farming, wildlife and countryside access
Tracy Hook	Walking and horse-riding
Shan Lewis	Walking and healthy lifestyles
Phil Mundell	Walking user and volunteer
David Smith	Walking & climbing user, volunteer leader healthy walking group
Mark Storey	Cycling, climbing & walker
Martin Sweeney	Outdoor pursuits

Appendix 2: Future Work Programme

Item	Background	Reporting Arrangements	Progress / Plans
Standard Items:			
Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP)	Progress in implementing the approved CAIP	Regular report	See Delivery Plan – summary report April 23
Performance Measures	MonLife Delivery Plan performance measures of CAMS issues	Regular report	See Delivery Plan – summary report April 23
Funding	Progress on and opportunities for external funded & MCC capital funded countryside access projects programmes	Regular report	CAIP bid reported to LAF April 22
Consultations	Consultations to the LAF on relevant matters as required	Report to LAF	Sustainable Farming Scheme response Nov 22 As required
Natural Resource Wales (NRW) updates	Update on forestry operations and access related issues	Regular report	Standing Agenda Item
Working Groups:			
Improvement subgroup (Proposed)	To be established to support working with local communities to identify future improvements	Regular report	TOR LAF 26 Jan 23
Wentwood subgroup (Proposed)	To seek to re-establish liaison arrangements in respect of Wentwood (with forestry managers and Newport CC)	Report as required	Discussions underway with key stakeholders to re-establish a Wentwood group
Gwent Access Group	To participate in the regional access group	Report as required	Group met July 22; Consultants appointed Nov 22 and workshop planned Feb 23
Work Programme Items			
Definitive Map Modification Order (DDMO) Claims	To review the number of claims and their prioritisation	Report to future meeting	Report to Oct 23 meeting

Welsh Government Access Reform	To receive any updates on progress on the access reforms	Report as required	Updates as received
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	Report to future meeting	Project Plan / Brief under preparation by AONB: Planned report to LAF April 23
Forest Resource Plans	To participate in the consultation on Natural Resource Wales (NRW) Wye Valley South Forest Resource Plan	Report to future meeting	Potential consultees identified Programme tbc

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