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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

3rd June 2024

Notice of meeting Local Access Forum

Tuesday, 11th June, 2024 at 2.00 pm,
Magor and Undy Community Hub, Main Road , Undy NP26 3GD

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Election of Chair and Deputy Chair	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
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6.	Discussion regarding additional members and observers (verbal)	
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8.	Dates and Times of Future meetings	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

Anne Underwood
Irene Brooke
Anthea Fairey
Shan Lewis
Phil Mundell
Phillip Allsopp
Bethany Handley
Barbara Heys
Ian Mawdsley
Terence Mead
Sallie Roderick
Jack Thurston
Kelvin Varney
Huw Watkins
Rhys Wynne-Jones
John Askew
County Councillors: Sara Burch

Public Information

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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

□ to become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in;
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

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.

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:

Anne Underwood

Irene Brooke

Anthea Fairey

Shan Lewis

Phil Mundell

Phillip Allsopp

Bethany Handley

Barbara Heys

Ian Mawdsley

Terence Mead

Sallie Roderick

Jack Thurston

Kelvin Varney

Huw Watkins

Rhys Wynne-Jones

John Askew

County Councillors: Sara Burch (the “Appointing Authority” representative)

Observers;

Representatives from Monmouthshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 4

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at Room P4 - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 9th November,
2023 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Irene Brooke
Jenny Cockitt,
Sheila Hampshire
Tracy Hook,
Shan Lewis,
Phil Mundell,
David Smith,
Mark Storey
Anne Underwood (Chair)
County Councillor Sara Burch,

OBSERVERS:

Richard Dickenson	Tomorrow's Tourism
Richard Garner	Public Rights of Way Officer
Paul Keeble	Group Engineer (Highways and Flood Management)
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Ruth Rourke	Countryside Access Manager
Christian Schmidt	Transport Planning and Policy Officer
Sarah Tindal	Natural Resources Wales

Plus two members of the public

1. Apologies for Absence / Introductions

Apologies were received from members: John Askew, Anthea Fairey, Sylvia Fowles, Martin Sweeney. Apologies were also given by Richard Ray MCC and Bob Campbell Natural Resources Wales. **AU** welcomed members to the meeting. Members and observers introduced themselves. It was noted that Councillor Sara Burch was now the MCC appointed member of the forum.

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 11th July 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 11 July 2023 were amended to reflect the scope of the discussion on item 5 Active Travel Update so as to read: *"With respect to Castle*

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
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2023 at 2.00 pm**

Meadows members discussed the issues around the active travel proposals including those raised by the cattle grids and it was noted that an invited stakeholder session with Abergavenny Town Council was to be held on Monday 17th July (additions underlined). The revised minutes were accepted (proposed by **IB** and seconded by **JC**).

JC reported back on her attendance at the stakeholder meeting. Members asked about progress on the scheme and a decision on the future use or not of cattle grids. **RER** confirmed that discussions were still ongoing with Welsh Government on the scheme details. **PK** updated on progress with the active travel bridge; despite two attempts to let the contract it had not yet been possible to appoint a contractor, however work has been completed on the ramp access on the west bank sufficient to commence and therefore maintain the planning consent.

4. Lower Wye Valley Tracks and Trails (Report attached)

ML briefly summarised the background to the Lower Wye Valley Tracks and Trails project (previously referred to as the Lower Wye Valley Integrated Recreational Access Strategy) which members were familiar with as a result of previous discussions and introduced **RD** from Tomorrow's Tourism who are undertaking the work on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership.

RD gave a short presentation outlining the work to date and the principles being the approach. The aim was to develop the most practical ways of supporting the requirements of all types of users, while protecting the natural and built environment for current and future generations. The intended outputs being a new strategy and action plan. To achieve this an inclusive process was proposed bringing together all stakeholders through a professionally facilitated, inclusive consultation.

The Strategy will look at ways both to better manage the natural resources of the AONB and also those that enjoy it, responding to the opportunity to support the tracks and trails network and reduce the impact of flooding and erosion. To seek to:

- Encourage responsible behaviours among all users and discouraging any unwanted behaviours.
- Creating an environment, through resources, facilities and education that enable all user groups to harmoniously enjoy all that the Wye Valley AONB has to offer.
- Provide support to landowners and Highway Authority to maintain tracks and trails, and their environments, in a way that ensures both good access for users and protects the natural and heritage features of the area..

When developing the strategy, the focus will be on the outcomes. That is the benefits that implementing the strategy will have on the community, the landscape, biodiversity and heritage.

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Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held at Room P4 - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 9th November, 2023 at 2.00 pm

RD provided details of the public consultation process that will run until early 2024 and encouraged participation and spreading the message as wide as possible.

RD outlined a request to members to help provide information on intensity and interactions of use across the network within the project area. This information would feed into the wider assessment.

SH asked about the relationship with similar routes in Gloucestershire. **RD & ML** indicated that whilst the project was funded by Welsh Government and therefore was limited to the Welsh part of the AONB liaison with Gloucestershire public rights of way team formed part of the consultations and background work. **AU** noted the heritage value of the network which reflected its historical development. **IB** asked about the role of community councils and the need to produce a practical report with realistic proposals. **RD** agreed that this was the intent and confirmed that community councils were part of the consultation process. **MS** asked if changing the status of paths was part of the project, he drew attention to paths that change their status over their length. **RER** confirmed that such consideration could be part of the process, subject to the relevant legal tests and could form part of the action plan. **RD** asked that the specific route referred to in Mitchell Troy be identified in any response

5. Countryside Access Updates

RER provided an update on Countryside Access projects. The team has been busy in the past month moving records to a new platform. This has included the installation of a new server for CAMS, the countryside access management system, and much work to link the records and ensure our mapping still works, which was still work in progress. Paper records have also been scanned and are being integrated into the new system. It was noted that this work is ongoing and there will be some disruption in next few weeks to ensure the systems all work properly and staff are trained to access the information.

RER & RG explained the proposed changes to display various legal registers and temporary closures within CAMS / the public interactive mapping system. This will significantly improve public access to information and reduce the time taken to maintain and update the information. Members were shown a completed example for Anglesey which illustrated the improved public interface. In response to members questions **RG** explained the desire to improve better base mapping within the interactive mapping as soon as practical.

RER updated members on progress on projects being funded via Wesh Government's Access Improvement Grant, including works at Black Rock Picnic Site, the Community Links project and the new SLA with Ramblers Cymru to support the Paths to

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Communities partnership. **RER** also referred to progress in assessing bridges across the network, in replacing the Treadam bridge on Offa's Dyke Path National Trail and countryside code promotion.

In respect of the access reform proposals recent discussions with Welsh Government had indicated that no primary legislation was planned and so only those proposals that could be undertaken with secondary legislation or changes to guidance were under consideration. **RER** indicated that further discussion between local authorities and Welsh Government was planned with authorities still lobbying for practical changes to reduce complexity and improve delivery, for example removing the need to advertise orders in the current format within newspapers.

Members discussed the proposed revision of the local access forum regulations which had been included in the topics at the recent LAF Chairs meeting attended by **AU** and **IB**. The suggestion that members should be limited to one 3-year term of office, had proved controversial and was opposed by the Chair's meeting. Members continue to be in favour of practical changes to the administration and holding of future meetings, including allowing hybrid meetings, electronic communication etc.

6. Draft Public Space Protection Orders on Dog Controls in Monmouthshire

Members considered the current consultation on the draft Public Space Protection Orders on Dog Controls in Monmouthshire. It was noted that in a very limited number of cases where dogs were proposed to be excluded (sports pitches and play areas) they were crossed by the definitive line of a public rights of way. In each case it was proposed there will not be any restriction on the public rights of way. Members raised questions around the proposed order including how they related to unfenced sports pitches and play areas and a concern restrictions could result in forcing more dog walking out into the surrounding countryside. **JC** asked how this issue, and that of the associated safety concerns of dogs near cattle, was addressed in the countryside code. **RER** responded that the [dog walking code](#) directly addressed this issue and that would form part of the activity identified under agenda item 5. After discussion the forum decide not to respond collectively and leave it individual members to respond as they wished.

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

For operational reasons NRW were unable to provide the usual update of NRW's land management and forest operations:

8. Conclusion of the current forum's term of office and recruitment of new forum

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at Room P4 - County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 9th November,
2023 at 2.00 pm**

As this was the last meeting of the current forum the secretary offered his thanks for the work of the forum over the last 3 years, for their advice and the individual contributions from members and the chair.

ML outlined the proposed arrangements to recruit a new forum. The County Council meeting on 20 July 2023 had established a new members panel which would consider all applications and report back their recommendations to the County Council for a final decision. The anticipated programme was publicity seeking new appointments by end of November, with a mid-January deadline, consideration by the panel to allow a report to the 29 February 2024 Council meeting and a first meeting of the new forum before the end of March 2024, thereby within the 4 month target between LAFs.

8. Dates of future meetings.

March 2024 to be established for the new forum

AU thanked members for their attendance and support and the meeting closed at 16:30pm.

Signed as a true record of the proceedings:
(Chair)

Date:

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at Sports Hall, Gilwern Outdoor Centre, Ty Mawr, Gilwern NP7 0EB on Thursday, 2nd
May, 2024 at 3.00 pm

PRESENT: Anthea Fairey,
Phillip Allsopp
John Askew
Irene Brooke
Bethany Handley
Barbara Heys
Shan Lewis
Terence Mead
Phil Mundell
Sallie Roderick
Anne Underwood
Kelvin Varney
Huw Watkins
Rhys Wynne-Jones
County Councillor Sara Burch,

ADVISERS/OBSERVERS

Richard Garner	Rights of Way Officer (MCC)
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
Robert Campbell	Natural Resources Wales
One Member of the Public	

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from members Ian Mawdsley and Jack Thurston and from Paul Keeble, Lead Engineer, Highways and Flooding.

2. Introductions by Members

ML welcomed members to the first meeting of the new local access forum and accordingly set by the appropriate regulations and guidance and chaired by ML as the current Local Access Forum Secretary. Introductions were made around the table with members outlining their areas of interest and observers their role in assisting the forum. ML outlined the interests of those members not able to attend. In response to a question ML indicated that members would have an opportunity to review the composition and balance of the forum's membership at the next meeting.

3. Initial Briefing by Appointing Authority

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held at Sports Hall, Gilwern Outdoor Centre, Ty Mawr, Gilwern NP7 0EB on Thursday, 2nd May, 2024 at 3.00 pm

ML introduced the initial briefing by way of a presentation. The presentation covered the role of the forum and its context.

ML outlined the scope of the wider countryside access network including the rights of way network, countryside access sites, promoted routes, open access land and other publicly accessible land. ML outlined MonLife's countryside access team, including their responsibilities and structure and the wider actions by other teams, including the Outdoor Adventure, Active Travel and Green Infrastructure teams, to promote wider access to the countryside.

ML outlined budgets and current grants and RR summarised countryside access policy, including the countryside access improvement plan, and its delivery including funding, partnerships, volunteering, and projects. ML outlined some of the challenges including balancing demand, asset condition, budgetary pressures, and partnership complexity.

ML introduced the future work programme including the Wye Valley Tracks and Trails project and a proposed review of the operation of the prioritisation scheme. The work programme will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting and ML asked members to consider their priorities and any training needs. The agreed work programme would then be added to the latest annual report and published.

4. The appointment procedure for Chair and Deputy Chair

ML explained that in accordance with the regulations the next meeting included the election of a Chair and Deputy Chair. ML indicated that he would circulate a request for nominations to the roles by email; self-nomination being acceptable.

5. Dates and times of future meetings

The next meeting's agenda includes the election of a Chair and Deputy Chair, agreement of the terms of reference, a discussion regarding whether additional members and observers are required to cover the full range of interests, the future work programme, and a programme of meeting dates for the next year. It was agreed a date would be set early in June for the next meeting following a poll of members preferences.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm

Terms of Reference for Monmouthshire Local Access Forum (as last approved 9th March 2021 and 26 January 2023)

Title

1. The Local Access Forum shall be known as the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum.

Roles and Responsibilities

2. The function of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum is to provide advice to the relevant local and National Park authorities, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and others as appropriate 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 in ways which take account of land management, social, economic, environmental and educational interests.
3. The Monmouthshire Local Access Forum will fulfill this role by advising on issues of particular local relevance, including:
 - a. supporting the implementation of the new right of access to open countryside.
 - b. improving the rights of way network; and
 - c. developing recreation and access strategies that cater for everyone.
4. The Monmouthshire Local Access Forum will work to:
 - a. develop a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of recreational access to the countryside.
 - b. respect local circumstances and different interests whilst operating within national guidance.
 - c. provide advice on issues of principle and good practice.
 - d. engage in constructive debate and seek consensus wherever possible; and
 - e. where consensus is not possible, make clear the nature of differing views, and suggest how they might be resolved.

Membership

5. The membership will include:
 - a. a Chair and Deputy Chair elected in accordance with the LAF regulations.
 - b. a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20 other members, which must include a balanced representation of i) recreational access users and ii)

landowners and occupiers - together with representation of other interests especially relevant to the area.

6. The membership will:
 - a. be balanced to avoid dominance by any single interest group.
 - b. represent a cross-section of interests in the area; and
 - c. live or work within the area or have a sound knowledge of the area.
7. Members will be expected to:
 - a. adhere to the sections relating to LAFs in the CROW Act and regulations and these Terms of Reference.
 - b. show commitment to achieving the aims of the Local Access Forum through constructive working with other members.
 - c. be able to devote the necessary time to attend meetings and to network outside meetings.
 - d. have sufficient experience of access to the countryside in the local area to be able to make an informed and constructive contribution to improving access provision; and
 - e. be capable of working with a wide range of interest groups.

Administration

Secretariat

8. The Monmouthshire Local Access Forum will have a Secretary appointed by the appointing authority who will be responsible for:
 - a. providing support to the chair of the Forum.
 - b. ensuring that the Forum is set up and run according to the CROW Act, Local Access Forum regulations and these Terms of Reference.
 - c. managing any resources dedicated to its work.
 - d. arranging and promoting meetings, including arranging the delivery of papers and information to Forum members and the public.
 - e. producing minutes of Forum meetings.
 - f. ensuring that any comments or suggestions made to the Appointing Body by the LAF receive an appropriate response within a reasonable time

Meetings

9. Meetings will be held at least two times a year, and more frequently as and when necessary, to be agreed by the LAF and the appointing authority.
10. Meeting agendas will be agreed between the Chair, the Deputy Chair and the Secretary — although any member may suggest agenda items for consideration.
11. Meetings will be advertised in advance and the minutes published.
12. The Chair will invite observers/advisors to the meeting when appropriate.
13. Observers/advisors will be able to contribute to the proceedings at the discretion of the Chair.
14. One representative of each of Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government and any officer of the appointing authority will automatically have observer status.
15. If necessary, Local Access Forum committees will be set up by the Chair after agreement with the members.
16. The chairing, membership and terms of reference of committees will be agreed by the Chair and members, based on the appended model improvement sub-group terms of reference.
17. All meetings of the LAF will be held in public. However, the person presiding, following a request from a member or members, may decide that the public should be barred for particular items for reasons of personal privacy or commercial confidentiality.
18. Should the need arise decisions will be brought to a vote by means of a show of hands.

9 March 2021 (TOR amended November 2013 and February 2017, with proposed change referencing sub-groups / TOR to reflect LAF decision on 26 January 2023)

Appendix: Monmouthshire Local Access Forum: Sub-Group Model TOR (as approved 26 January 2023):

Improvement Sub Group terms of reference

1. The sub-group is established as a committee of the Local Access Forum in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum.
2. As agreed at the Local Access Forum meeting on 26 April 2022 the *improvement* sub-group's purpose is *to assist in the implementation of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan, including:*
 - a. *Helping in the identification of routes for improvement*
 - b. *Assisting in working with local communities to assess these improvement opportunities*
 - c. *Assist in monitor and identify the benefits of schemes within communities*
 - d. *Assist in engaging with local path groups, community councils and others to facilitate volunteer engagement in resolving issue*
 - e. *Assist in formulating funding bids*
 - f. *Consider and prepare responses on the Local Access Forum's behalf to improvement proposals including consultations under forestry / farming schemes*
3. The membership of the sub-group is open to any member of the Local Access Forum and to any other individuals who would assist in the sub-group's work.
4. The appointment of non LAF members to the sub-group will be subject to approval by a simple majority of the full Local Access Forum,
5. Any additional sub-group members who are not Local Access Forum members will nevertheless be expected to adhere to the requirements on Local Access Forum members set out in the approved Terms of Reference for the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum.
6. The Chair of the sub-group will be a LAF member and agreed amongst the group's members and subject to approval by the Local Access Forum's Chair
7. The appointing authority will provide support to the sub-group, primarily through liaison *with the Community Links Officer and the Public Rights of Way Officer.*
8. The sub-group's Chair will be responsible for recording the group's considerations and reporting progress, and any issues requiring a decision, to the Local Access Forum on a regular basis.
9. The duration of the sub-group is at the discretion of the Local Access Forum and will end at the end of the Local Access Forum's period of appointment. The sub-group may be re-established, and any non LAF members reappointed, by the new Local Access Forum.

AGENDA ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: Future work programme

MEETING: MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM 11 June 2024

Below is the work programme taken from the last annual report (2022/23) annotated with progress (in bold). In addition, the Countryside access team is committed to a review of the operation of the prioritisation scheme within 2024/25 (as agreed in a recent internal audit), which will require the forum’s input and our focus on bridges, including the additional capital allocation, means it would be timely for the forum to consider the issues and prioritisation of bridges, as this was last reviewed in 2020. Members may wish to add additional items.

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 23 (Last reported LAF November 2023)
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 23 (Last reported LAF November 2023)
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 (report to LAF 11 June 24)
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 (Not progressed)
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 (Last reported LAF November 2023)
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