

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held at Shire Hall - Monmouth on Tuesday, 23rd July, 2024 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT:

Phillip Allsopp
Anthea Fairey
Bethany Handley
Barbara Heys
Terence Mead
Phil Mundell
Sallie Roderick
Jack Thurston
Anne Underwood
Kelvin Varney
Huw Watkins
Rhys Wynne-Jones
County Councillor Sara Burch

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Dickenson	Tomorrow's Tourism
Sion Evans	Wye Valley National Landscape
Richard Garner	Public Right of Way Officer
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Richard Ray	Paralegal
Helen Roberts	XV Insight
Ruth Rourke	Countryside Access Manager

APOLOGIES:

Bob Campbell, Ian Mawdsley and Sarah Tindal

1. Election of Deputy Chair

PM welcomed members to the third meeting of the new local access forum and outlined the procedure for election of a Deputy Chair. Two nominations had been received for Deputy Chair and following a secret ballot of those members in attendance Barbara Heys was elected as Deputy Chair.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th June 2024.

The minutes of the meeting of the meeting of 11 June 2024 were approved. ML indicated that the recruitment of additional members to reflect landowner / managers and equestrian interests had commenced and if suitable individuals came forward they would be invited to attend future meetings as observers prior to their formal appointment by the County Council.

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3. Presentation on the Tracks and Trails Consultation and Strategy by Richard Dickinson (Tomorrow's Tourism) and Helen Roberts (XV Insight) - Tracks and Trails Strategy and Consultation Report attached

RD and HR presented a summary of the Tracks and Trails strategy and the associated consultation process. The project was commissioned by the Wye Valley National Landscape partnership and the aims was to produce a widely supported Integrated Recreation Access Strategy for the Monmouthshire part of the Lower Wye Valley bringing together all stakeholders through inclusive consultation that prioritised recreation access routes, agreed sustainable solutions and produced an agreed and costed action plan. RD outlined the strategic framework, and the research element, and HR outlined the consultation process and responses received.

RD went on to outline the principal findings of the asset audit, the challenges and opportunities presented and the resulting strategy. The vision is for the Wye Valley's Tracks & Trails to be a resilient, well managed and welcoming place for all responsible users. To achieve this three core priorities have been identified; boosting awareness, an inclusive approach "Wye for All", and robust management, supported by two enabling priorities; better data and making it happen.

ML outlined progress in establishing a steering group following the forum's agreement on 11 June 2024 to establish that as a sub group of the forum. The Wye Valley National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee endorsed the strategy and the proposed governance arrangements on 8 July 2024 and the Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group (the coordination group between the Council and the community councils in the Lower Wye Valley) has nominated a member to form part of the steering group.

SE outlined the role that the National Landscape team could now take to help facilitate the initial meetings of the steering group and bring the limited currently available resources to assist early implementation and the development of future bids.

Members asked a number of questions, including relating to the consultation process and the activities respondents reported. HR reflected that was a summary of consultation response received as this was a consultation process not market research. HR indicated that she felt the level of response was a fair one given the nature of the consultation and issues under discussion. RD added that whilst the results of the consultation were important the wider and supportive organisational input was also significant in framing the proposed actions. In response to further questions the need to develop clearer cross organisational data sharing agreements was acknowledged, and is an action identified in the action plan. The prioritisation of actions was discussed and that would be an initial task for the steering group to review and come to some agreement. Insight into how users select trails was also discussed and the challenge of the ready availability of online information of variable quality.

PM indicated that the secretary would now seek nominations from members to be part of the steering group and as discussed as initial meeting would be facilitated after the summer.

4. Operational updates (NRW and MCC)

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Observers from NRW were unable to attend the meeting but written updates (on recreational and operational issues) had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.

RR introduced the MCC operational update referring to the award of funding from the GWR Community Fund for Rogiet Countryside Park, including for new direction and orientation signage to link with the Wales Coast Path, and to the continuation of Wesh Government Access Improvement Grant in the current year. RR indicated that this, and the community links programme, would be the subject of a future report to the forum. The written report included links to two videos recently supported through the grant.

RR summarised the current position on the replacement of Treadam Bridge on Offa's Dyke Path National Trail which was being supported via grant aid from NRW. Finally reference was made to two current issues, coastal erosion of the Wales Coast Path at Black Rock and a recent landslip on the permitted Wye Valley Walk route at Piercefield Woods which was illustrated to members.

5. Dates and times of future meetings - 2.00pm 7th November 2024 and 2.00pm 19th February 2025

2.00pm 7th November 2024 and 2.00pm 19th February 2025, venues to be advised
Members thanked the outgoing Secretary who responded accordingly.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm