

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at Gym Area, Gilwern Outdoor Adventure Centre, Ty Mawr Rd, Gilwern, Abergavenny,
NP7 0EB on Wednesday, 19th February, 2025 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Anthea Fairey,
Phillip Allsopp,
Irene Brooke,
Ian Mawdsley,
Phil Mundell,
Jack Thurston,
Anne Underwood
Kelvin Varney

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Garner Public Right of Way Officer
Ruth Rourke Countryside Access Manager
Robert Campbell, Natural Resources Wales
Sarah Tindal, Natural Resources Wales

Two Members of the Public

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor Sara Burch, B. Handley, B. Heys, T. Mead and S. Roderick

1. Apologies for Absence / Introductions.

LAF meeting opened with RG going through general housekeeping.

Apologies were received from members John Askew, Sara Burch, Barbara Heys, Sallie Roderick, Terence Mead, and Bethany Handley and from Richard Ray, Monmouthshire County Council.

2. Declarations of Interest

None Received.

3. To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 7th November 2024 (Attached).

The minutes of the meeting of 7th November 2024 were accepted.

4. Actions arising from the previous meeting not on the agenda:

Subscription to 'Waymark' IPRow Journal: RG informed the LAF that login details have been sent out – action complete.

Additional LAF member recruitment

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RG updated the LAF regarding no reply being received from potential contact related to the Farmers Union of Wales(FUW), and no response received from the National Farmers Union(NFU) or Country Land and Business Association (CLA). IB questioned whether the LAF is representative/balanced in regards to landowners. Recommendations to go out to more landowners and horse riders directly, these included some examples such as Fisheries, private forestry etc and for LAF members to pass on to any landowners they were aware of.

ACTION: contact other landowners as suggested - RG

ACTION: contact or pass on contact details of potential landowners/horse riders – LAF members

Regional Wellbeing health project

Contact details distributed to LAF – action complete

Data Map Wales

Link distributed to LAF – action complete

Website for registers on cams web:

With Welsh language officer to test new Welsh side of site

ACTION: Update LAF when available for initial viewing -RG

5. Tracks and Trails project update (link to minutes):

Members provided an update on the previous meeting, with detailed notes available online at the Lower Wye Tracks & Trails - Wye Valley National Landscape website (<https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-projects/lowerwyetracksandtrails/>). Recommendations were made to explore other areas such as the Yorkshire Dales, focusing on Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), effective recording methods, and understanding how TROs affect usage on routes and adjacent routes.

A site meeting is due to be held in March and the next meeting is likely to take place in May, following the consultants' report being received.

There were concerns raised at the meeting about the number of consultations, the perceived lack of action on the ground and management of expectations. Community councils are becoming anxious to see tangible actions and are concerned about the costs involved, leading to some disillusionment with the project.

In response the goal of the current consultant's report was clarified, which will subsequently enable funding bids to take place for action on the ground, this report is expected to be received by the 31st of March and will subsequently be circulated to the LAF.

An Issue with 'Coal Lane' was also raised, as this wasn't part of the focus of the project as yet and related to other issues, the recommendation was made to refer this on to highways, noting that the new highways manager is currently in a transition phase and expected to take post in April.

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ACTION: Circulate minutes and website to the LAF when available – RG

ACTION: Circulate consultant's report when available - RG

ACTION: Update to next LAF meeting- BH/Subgroup

6. Natural Resources Wales update- (notes attached) (Sarah Tindal, Senior Officer People and Places, South East Wales/ Bob Campbell Senior Officer Land Management, South East Wales)

BC provided an operational update, with detailed notes attached to the agenda. A priority system for clearing trees and other obstructions has been established. The local team has experienced a reduction in roles, decreasing from 13 to 10, which has impacted operations.

There has been an increase in accessibility due to the removal of furniture and fence lines when not needed. National Forest funding has been paused and is expected to resume in the next financial year. There was a discussion on ensuring that surfaces are suitable for users.

A query was raised regarding illegal off-road usage on NRW estate, BC responded by asking members to contact the police as they have the authority to enforce regulations, and to also raise awareness of this locally.

The local NRW team should ideally be contacted via the incident line or email below, for any issues encountered on the woodland estate:

Local team email: forestsandnaturesoutheast@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

For urgent or out of hrs incidents/reports use the Incident Control Centre (ICC) :
0300 065 3000 (24/7) Natural Resources Wales / Report an incident

Reporting off-road vehicles: contact@gwent.pnn.police.uk Call 101 Tweet/X: @gwentpolice

7. Natural Resources Wales Recreational Strategy presentation (Sarah Tindal, Senior Officer People and Places, South East Wales & Bob Campbell Officer Land Management, South East Wales)

ST and BC carried out a presentation for the LAF on the Recreational strategy, attached.

The full strategy is available for viewing here: [Natural Resources Wales / Recreation strategy: how we manage access to nature on the land in our care 2024-2030](#)

Additionally noting that efforts are being made to enhance the ability to work with NRW and reduce existing barriers with educational initiatives being implemented to change behaviour. There was also some attention on potentially providing facilities for overnight camping, toilets etc, where costs are manageable, and help to regulate activities that are already occurring.

8. Monmouthshire Prioritisation system review (Ruth Rourke, Countryside Access Manager & Richard Garner, Public rights of Way Officer)

RER & RG gave an overview of the current prioritisation system and how it is weighted to give a score, this score then helps determine which issues should be prioritised first. And that the system was being reviewed to make sure it was still effective and weighted in the best way possible. The LAF was asked for any improvements or queries they had in regard to this.

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Feedback received was around unsealed unclassified roads and where these would feature, possibly in regards to the tracks and trails project.

How issues are reported by the public and the potential difficulties between the various reporting systems on MCC sites, a keen interest that one login should be all that is required, rather than multiple eg my Monmouthshire login is spereate from the interactive access map login.

Also interested in ways to show the public which routes are available/last inspected

9. LAF forward working plan (for noting)

The forum was provided with the future work programme for noting.

Action: Review Future Work Programme at next LAF meeting -LAF members

10. Dates for future meetings and venue

The following dates were put forward for future meetings:

September 9th 2025

November 26th 2025

Next meeting:

2.00pm on Tuesday 13th May

Venue to be confirmed in the Chepstow area

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm