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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

11th February 2025

Notice of meeting Local Access Forum

Wednesday, 19th February, 2025 at 2.00 pm,
Gym Area, Gilwern Outdoor Adventure Centre, Ty Mawr Rd, Gilwern,
Abergavenny, NP7 0EB

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence / Introductions.	1 - 6
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 7th November 2024 (Attached).	
4.	Actions arising from the previous meeting not on the agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subscription to 'Waymark' IPRoW Journal login sent out - complete• Additional LAF member recruitment update• Regional Wellbeing health project distribute contact details – complete• Data Map Wales link – complete	
5.	Tracks and Trails project update (link to minutes): https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Notes-of-LWTT-SG-05-12-24.pdf) (Subgroup update)	
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)	To Follow
7.	Natural Resources Wales Recreational Strategy presentation (Sarah Tindal, Senior Officer People and Places, South East Wales & Bob	To Follow

	Campbell Officer Land Management, South East Wales)	
8.	Monmouthshire Prioritisation system review (Ruth Rourke, Countryside Access Manager & Richard Garner, Public rights of Way Officer)	
9.	LAF forward working plan (for noting)	7 - 8
10.	Dates for future meetings and venue	

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

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

□ 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

Public Document Pack **Agenda Item 3**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Thursday, 7th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: Philip Allsopp,
Bethany Handley,
Barbara Heys,
Shan Lewis,
Ian Mawdsley,
Terence Mead,
Phil Mundell,
Sally Roderick,
Jack Thurston,
Anne Underwood,
Kelvin Varney
Rhys Wynne-Jones
Plus Two Members of the Public

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Garner	Public Right of Way Officer
Dez Jones	Regional Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator, GGGP
Andy Powell	Field Officer, MCC
Richard Ray	Paralegal
Ruth Rourke	Countryside Access Manager

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor Sara Burch, R. Campbell. A. Fairey and H. Watkins

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from members John Askew, Anthea Fairey, Irene Brooke, County Councillor Sara Burch, Huw Watkins and from Bob Campbell Natural Resources Wales.

Welcome and Welsh Translations: LAF meeting opened with RG going through general housekeeping, a query was also put to the LAF as to any members requiring Welsh translation services or documents, no members required this service.

2. Declarations of Interest

None received

3. To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 23 July 2024.

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd July 2024 were accepted, (Proposed AU and seconded by BH)

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Thursday, 7th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

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

Subscription to 'Waymark' IPRoW Journal:
RG informed the LAF that once login details had been received these would be distributed to members.

ACTION: Send out login details once received – RG

Additional LAF member recruitment:
RG updated the LAF regarding contact emails sent out beginning of August to National Farmers Union (NFU), Farmers Union of Wales (FUW) & Country Land and Business Association (CLA), chaser sent start of October. As result of the FUW request a lady has put herself forward, we are currently waiting on her application for starting the process for membership of the forum. CLA has forwarded the information on, waiting to hear anything further.

ACTION: continue pursuing additional LAF membership - RG

5. Regional Wellbeing health project (Dez Jones, Regional Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator)

(Dez Jones, Regional Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator)

DJ made a presentation (attached) to the LAF on his role and work as part of the Gwent Green Grid project (GGGP) team, funded through the Shared prosperity fund (SPF) and Nature networks fund, he is employed out of Caerphilly council, but covers the five authorities of Gwent. DJ started with a brief overview of what the GGGP team undertakes, and on how his role fits in within this, seeking to support communities from a health and wellbeing perspective.

To undertake this with the limited time, resources and a large area to cover, he actively gathers intelligence and evidence using health data statistics to inform and target his work, such as identifying areas of deprivation for example. This has led to consulting with communities and groups, to find the issues that they encounter and how they see potential solutions to these. This may subsequently lead to further signposting to other organisations such as keep wales tidy (KWT), or groups without borders and extensive partnership working.

Where able to, some of the limited funding is being used to kick start projects that have a sustainable effect, examples include walking group leader training, Gilwern diversification-funding a number of raised beds and poly tunnel and into the woods project.

These projects vary from group to group, which can be difficult to balance.

Finally, he presented a video giving a brief intro to the GGGP health and wellbeing element and introduced the 'Into the woods' project.

Video link: [Back to the Woods Basecamp - Monmouthshire - Gwent Green Grid on Vimeo](#)

Questions received included.

What support could be provided for walking for health, and how to gain access to it? Subsequent discussion about having local authority designated officers working with the NHS via GP referral scheme, support needed to keep groups running long term, rather than just being left.

What aspects are you using to inform the targets? Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) score, -using local communities to highlight what they want/need, their stories.

For example, looking at the various health indices, highlighted that female life expectancy significantly lower in an area, and sparked an investigation to look deeper into why this is.

LAF involvement – a request to raise awareness and engage with community groups, DJ has also left his contact details.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Thursday, 7th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm

At conclusion the chair, on behalf of the LAF, thanked DJ for his informative presentation and contribution to the meeting.

6. Tracks and Trails project update (minutes attached) (Subgroup update)

BH gave an update to the LAF regarding the tracks and trails steering group meeting that had taken place on the 8th October 2024, for which she was elected as chair. Although unable to attend the meeting the draft minutes were provided to run through (attached), with others providing input that had attended. The minutes of the meeting are not yet available online, however these will be placed on the National landscape website.

One of the main actions from the sub-group is to implement a targeted survey of two pilot areas by consultants, the results of this to inform a fuller survey across most, if not all, of the relevant routes in the Wye valley national landscape areas. Subsequent meetings of the steering group are needed due to the scope of work, and the survey will also be used to inform their next steps.

Further discussion took place regarding consistent signage being a key part of this work, the continuing discussion around the suitability of the routes, both in terms of potential restrictions and improved accessibility and agreement that the membership of the LAF subgroup attending the steering group is to remain as current.

The next tracks and trails steering group meeting is due to take place on the 3rd of December 2024.

ACTION: Circulate minutes and website to the LAF- RG

ACTION: Update to next LAF meeting- BH/Subgroup

7. Natural Resources Wales update- (notes attached) (Sarah Tindal, Senior Officer People and Places, South East Wales)

(Sarah Tindal, Senior Officer People and Places, Southeast Wales)

SD went through and covered the attached update note from Bob Campbell and reported that the case for change work affecting NRW is ongoing and a presentation on the NRW recreation strategy and a fuller update will be given at the next LAF meeting.

Action: present NRW recreation strategy to next LAF – ST/BC

8. Monmouthshire Countryside Access update (Ruth Rourke, Countryside Access Manager & Andy Powell Countryside Access Management Officer)

RER ran through the attached update, highlighting; a grant application bid for £35,000 submitted for the Wales Coast Path Links and Loops project to improve three key routes, an appointed consultant will provide a consultation opportunity and a final report with all the necessary information to submit a further bid in new financial year.

A second grant bid has also been made to improve access for all, along stretches of the Wales Coast Path in Newport and Monmouthshire. A brief assessment was carried out by Experience Community (EC), in 2023/24 and this project looks at improving the scheme. A consultant will be asked to provide a costed and designed feasibility report. The grant will need to be completed by 31st March 2025. It again will provide the information to inform a further grant for implementation on the ground.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Thursday, 7th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm

Additionally, the Access Improvement Grant is in its final year, and has included the creation of training videos and seen significant volunteer efforts led by Tom Arnold, completing 63 task days.

RER also gave a brief update on bridges, including the Offa's dyke Treadam bridge and Inglis bridge in Monmouth, with a more detailed overview and presentation followed by AP.

RER also explained nationally Monmouthshire County Council is also involved with the Welsh Government and their aim of creating an All Wales Digital Map of public rights of way and access. The Welsh Government Geography Team (DataMapWales) are seeking to unify Public Rights of Way (PROW) digital mapping into a single digital map, managed by Data Map Wales.

Monmouthshire has already submitted most of the requested data as a pilot area (this information is already available at [access.monmouthshire](https://access.monmouthshire.gov.uk/)). LAF members queried the Data map Wales site, which was described as a central website for public open data, with a map element and was available to the public. Interest was expressed by forum members in receiving the data map Wales website link.

RER introduced one of the access teams Field officers, Andy Powell to present the ongoing work he has been involved with on bridges across the county.

AP presented a detailed overview of the current situation with bridges across the county, outlining the varying different types and lengths of structures across the 1362 bridges that can be found.

Their general condition, the challenges being faced in terms of inspection, repairs, closures and replacement.

In particular the process being used once a bridge has been closed, initial site visit, either after a report from a member of the public, or after a routine inspection, decision to close the bridge by notice (emergency notice lasts up to 24 days), then either programme in works to repair, if able to do so, or seek a closure order (lasting up to 6 months). To enable the bridge to remain closed whilst waiting for a replacement. Bridges in this position are added to a list and prioritised for replacement.

Once a bridge is to be replaced, funding needs to be sought, tenders are requested both to invite contractors to supply a bridge, remove the old one, prepare the ground and install the bridge, arrangements are also made with landowners to gain access, and the bridge installed. Several difficulties can arise during this process, such as the weather, water levels, landownership issues, bridge location, erosion etc. The recent Offa's dyke bridge was given as an example of where weather and water levels delayed installation and groundwork, and after installing the bridge, further storms meant that the new bridge needed a large tree removing from under neath it, further delaying the opening. Currently, although available, final works to the approaches are needed but this will need drier weather before this can occur.

Additionally, where some bridges that continue to be used, and barriers erected broken, despite the closure, a decision may be made to remove the bridge altogether until a replacement can be installed.

Finally, AP gave the current position of the asset management plan, and this year's bridge works that are hoped to be achieved, removing 10, replacing up to 15 and 4 with further assessments.

9. Future member submissions

The forum was asked whether they feel it would be worthwhile being able to send in written contributions, that could be circulated to the LAF, ahead of each meeting for noting. This was seen as a good idea and to be undertake from the next LAF.

ACTION: send out email requesting any written submissions. - RG

10. Date of next meeting 2.00pm on Wednesday 19th February (Venue to be confirmed)

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Thursday, 7th November, 2024 at 2.00 pm**

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

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Future Work Programme 2024/2025

Item	Background	Reporting Arrangements	Progress / Plans
Standard Items:			
Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP)	Progress in implementing the approved CAIP	Regular report	Future Meetings via regular MCC operational update
Performance Measures	MonLife Delivery Plan performance measures of CAMS issues	Regular report	Future Meetings via regular MCC operational update
Funding	Progress on and opportunities for external funded & MCC capital funded countryside access projects programmes	Regular report	Future Meetings via regular MCC operational update
Consultations	Consultations to the LAF on relevant matters as required	Report to LAF	As required
Natural Resource Wales (NRW) updates	Update on forestry operations and access related issues	Regular report	Future Meetings via regular NRW operational update
Working Groups:			
Improvement subgroup (Proposed)	To be established to support working with local communities to identify future improvements, initially focussed on Chepstow Park Wood and then Wentwood Forest, subject to re-establishment of liaison arrangements with land managers and Newport City Council.	Regular report	Model TOR and agreement to establish LAF 11 June 2024; Update future meetings
Lower Wye Valley Tracks and Trails subgroup (Proposed)	To be established to act as the Tracks and Trails project steering group	Regular report	Model TOR and agreement to establish LAF 11 June 2024; Update future meetings
Gwent Access Group	To participate in the regional access group as required (currently dormant)	Report as required	As required
Work Programme Items			
Review of the existing prioritisation system for maintenance, enforcement and legal orders (including DMMO claims)	To review the operation of the prioritisation system	Report to future meeting	Future Meeting within 24/25

Bridges	To consider the asset management plan & capital programme	Report to future meeting	Future Meeting
Community Engagement and Volunteering	To consider the volunteering and community engagement programme	Report to future meeting	Future Meeting
Welsh Government Access Reform	To receive any updates on progress on the access reforms	Report as required	Updates as received