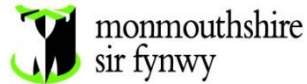


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County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026

## Notice of meeting Local Access Forum

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at Innovation House, Wales1 Business Park,  
Newport Rd, Caldicot NP26 3DG**

### AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence / Introductions</b>	
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
3.	<b>To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 11th of February 2026</b>	1 - 4
4.	<b>Tracks and Trails project: To receive an update from the steering group</b>	Verbal Report
5.	<b>Volunteering update and issues arising</b>  Current position, and future proofing.  Establishment of improvement sub-group.  (Andy Powell, Tom Arnold & Ross Emery, Monmouthshire County Council)	
6.	<b>Goytre Hall wood project, woodland Improvement Grant (TWIG funding)</b>  (Colette Bosley, Monmouthshire County Council)	
7.	<b>Natural Resources Wales update for information purposes</b>  (Sarah Tindal, Senior Officer People and Places, South East Wales  Bob Campbell Senior Officer Land Management, South East Wales)	5 - 6
8.	<b>LAF Future Work Programme for review and updating</b>	7 - 8

<b>9.</b>	<b>LAF Annual Report</b>	9 - 22
<b>10.</b>	<b>LAF Written contribution questions.</b>  Operational update countryside access - progress in implementing the approved Countryside Access Improvement Plan	23 - 30
<b>11.</b>	<b>Dates and locations of future meetings</b>	

**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: Tony Easson

## **Public Information**

### **Access to paper copies of agendas and reports**

A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

### **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





## Monmouthshire County Council Local Access Forum

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum

Held at the Council chambers, County hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA

on Wednesday 11th February 2026 at 12.30 pm

PRESENT:

### MEMBERS:

Phillip Allsopp	PA	
Irene Brooke	IB	
Anthea Fairey		AF
Anthony Easson	AE	
Barbara Heys		BH
Shan Lewis	SL	
Ian Mawdsley	IM	
Phil Mundell (chair)	PM	
Sallie Roderick	SR	
Jack Thurston	JT	
Anne Underwood	AU	
Kelvin Varney		KV

### ADVISERS/OBSERVERS

Richard Garner, Local Access Forum Secretary	RG
Colette Bosley, Monmouthshire County Council	CB
Richard Ray, Monmouthshire County Council	RR
Andrew Blake, Wye Valley National Landscape (online)	AB
Celyn Davies, Wye Valley National Landscape	CD
Ruth Waycott, Wye Valley National Landscape	RW
Bob Campbell, Natural Resources Wales	BC
Sarah Tindal, Natural Resources Wales	ST
And two members of the public/observers	

## Welcome

LAF meeting opened with RG going through general housekeeping, including recording of transcript of meeting for the purpose of helping with minutes, all present agreed to this.

### 1. Apologies for Absence/introductions

Apologies were received from members John Askew, Terence Mead, Bethany Handley, Huw Watkins, Rhys Wynne-Jones and from Monmouthshire County Council; Ruth Rourke and Carl Touhig.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

None received

### 3. To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

The minutes of the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> September 2025 were accepted,

Proposed: BH

Seconded: KV

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

### Wentwood Steering Group:

A meeting of the Steering Group had taken place, although attendance had been limited, largely due to unforeseen circumstances including the impacts of the flooding, RG reported that the meeting nonetheless identified a number of actions to take forward.

It was confirmed that a further meeting would be arranged later this year.

**ACTION: Set up Wentwood steering group meeting and report back to LAF - RG**

## 5. Management update. To consider resourcing for countryside access

(Colette Bosley, Countryside, Destination, Environment Manager)

*(Countryside Access Service Update document attached to agenda)*

A management and resourcing update was presented by CB, including talking to the Countryside Access Service Update document provided by Ruth Rourke, CountrySide Access Manager.

### Organisational changes:

CB confirmed she had assumed responsibility following the retirement of Matthew Lewis.

Countryside Access now sits within the Place and Community Wellbeing Directorate, alongside planning, regeneration, transport, leisure, culture and heritage.

### Staffing updates:

As per access service update, Funding secured via Access Improvement Grant funding.

### Funding and budgets:

An indicative capital allocation for Rights of Way is proposed for the forthcoming financial year, subject to Council approval.

Funding remains volatile, and officers advised that while grant funding continues, long-term guarantees cannot be made.

### Weather impacts:

Ongoing recovery from recent storms, including Storm Claudia, is placing pressure on resources.

Bridge damage and closures remain a significant issue, with approximately 25 bridge projects anticipated during 2026.

### Strategic context:

Work continues under the Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy, including a climate risk assessment being produced with NRW.

### Community engagement:

Continued emphasis on partnership working with volunteer groups and community organisations.

### Discussion highlights:

SR queried securing funding for the future -CB confirmed 2 years access improvement grant, but always on the lookout for more, but can be difficult to predict.

The LAF expressed general appreciation for the work of the community links officers with volunteer groups across Monmouthshire.

AE raised a concern regarding the prolonged closure of a public footpath adjacent to the landfill

site in Caldicot, Officers confirmed awareness and noted the complexity of enforcement and multi-agency responsibility, a fuller update can be provided outside of the LAF meeting.

## 6. Wheeling and PhotoTrails Chepstow Park Woods (Ruth Waycott, Wye Valley National Landscape Team/ NRW Sara Tindal )

A presentation was delivered showcasing work undertaken to improve off-road accessibility.

### Key points raised:

Workshops with accessibility specialists and wheelchair users demonstrated both opportunities and challenges associated with different surfaces and terrain.

Successful initiatives included:

- Accessible bridges and routes near Ross-on-Wye.

- An “Off-road Wheeling” weekend, attended by around 100 people.

- Wheelchair rambles and accessible benches at key viewpoints.

Recent work had focused on Chepstow Park Wood, with an 8km accessible route surveyed and promoted through PhotoTrails.

Emphasis was placed on enabling access to existing routes rather than creating new ones, and on providing accurate information to help users make informed decisions.

### Discussion highlights:

Members welcomed the initiative and highlighted the positive impact on inclusion and wellbeing.

The value of partnerships with NRW and volunteer groups was emphasised.

Members discussed potential for replication elsewhere, subject to funding and site suitability.

IM queried the forestry works, with tracks having v large stones used, without a top dressing. That this then makes the online content out of date and makes the route less accessible, NRW responded that they are aware of this issue and are working with their contractors on ways to address this.

**ACTION:** Officers to scope whether elements of the Chepstow Park Woods accessibility model could be expanded to other suitable sites within Monmouthshire, including funding implications.

## 7. Tracks and Trails project update

*(Presentation attached to agenda)*

Tracks and trails steering group minutes available online here:

<https://www.wyvalley-nl.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-projects/lowerwyetracksandtrails/>

Celyn Davies, Wye Valley National landscape, made a presentation on the current position of the Tracks and Trails project and Steering Group.

The project originated in early 2024 following public consultation and development of a Strategy and Action Plan.

A Steering Group was established in October 2024, with five meetings to date, including the December 2025 workshop.

Site visits had taken place at:

Chapel Hill Road (Tintern)

Grove Road / Horseway (Whitebrook)

A consultant's report for 2 pilot areas assessing the condition of unsealed unclassified roads (UCRs) was completed and subsequently revised.

Key recurring issues identified included: erosion, drainage, vegetation encroachment, signage gaps, heritage degradation, misuse, and ecological sensitivity.

Concerns were raised regarding Appendix E of the report, intended to clarify legal and access matters; publication has been delayed pending legal input.

The next meeting of the steering group is due to take place on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026

### Discussion highlights:

Members emphasised the importance of recognising the impacts on residents and communities, which were believed to not be sufficiently addressed in the consultant's report.

It was agreed that decision-making should remain with the Steering Group, with progress reported to the full LAF.

**ACTION:** Steering Group to convene a further meeting, with attendance from a legal officer and Highways Records Manager, to resolve concerns about Appendix E.

**ACTION:** Steering Group to prioritise surveyed routes and bring forward recommendations for phased implementation.

## 8. Natural Resources Wales(NRW) update

*(Bob Campbell Senior Officer Land Management & Sarah Tindal, Senior Officer People and Places, Southeast Wales)*

*(Operational update attached to agenda)*

Ongoing tree safety works, particularly relating to ash dieback.

Drainage and culvert maintenance across the woodland road network.

Bridge repairs and reinstatement following storm damage.

Challenges in maintaining forest roads beyond forestry operational standards due to funding limitations.

Acknowledgement of concerns regarding surface materials affecting accessibility.

Open Access land review periods extended from 15 to 20 years, with the next review now due in 2034.

**ACTION:** NRW to report back to LAF on options for improving consistency of surface materials and accessibility on forest roads where feasible.

## 9. Dates and timing of next meetings and locations

Next meeting agreed as:

10am on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Venue to be confirmed



### Monmouth LAF meeting update

10/06/26

#### NRW Update:

##### 1. Land Management update:

The Team continue to be busy with our day to day management works on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate (WGWE)

Here are some key updates on recent and planned works across the area:

- For the next few months we will be focusing on OGB1 tree safety with some larger projects for that taking place on A466 (Coed Beddick) and also at Fedw.
- The drainage monitoring and maintenance works continues across the area.
- The Coppice Mawar bridge has been replace and minor works to improve the car park have been carried out.
- Birch clearance at Beacon hill heathland continues which is an ongoing long term project.
- Grazing cattle are back on Beacon Hill also for the summer, improved signage is on its way.
- The works to the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Y Graig, near Abergavenny is ongoing and should be finished end of June.
- We have secured some initial National Forest Funding to improve accessibility on the Whitestone promoted routes.
- Day to Day forest management such as litter/flytipping/grass cutting/culvert maintenance etc.

For any queries please use the Land Management Team contact e mail:

[forestsandnaturesoutheast@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:forestsandnaturesoutheast@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

NOTE: 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](mailto:contact@gwent.pnn.police.uk) Call 101 @gwentpolice

## 2. Forest Operations update:

Current program is focused on managing tree diseases, Larch & Ash die back, most operations in the area are carried out in the Autumn/winter due to bird nesting and other protection restrictions. There are no current 'live sites' or any being worked 'imminently' however there are the following that are due for sale with potential September start dates:

- **Hendra:** Thinning
- **Beacon Hill:** Thinning with some Larch removal
- **Trellech Nunnery:** Thinning and some minor Larch removal

There is some general information on or Forest Operations the NRW website here:

[Upcoming forestry and land management work, Northern and Southern Wye woodlands, Monmouthshire - Natural Resources Wales Citizen Space - Citizen Space \(cyfoethnaturiol.cymru\)](#)

There will also be further 'drop in' sessions to meet the Forest Ops Team and to see and discuss future plans in the North but the date is not set yet.

To contact the Forest Operations team direct please use:

[SEForest.operations@naturalresources.wales](mailto:SEForest.operations@naturalresources.wales)

### Action points from meetings:

<b>Serial &amp; Type</b> -Action -Decision -Note -Point	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Completed (if required)</b>

Bob Campbell

[Uwch Swyddog Rheoli Tir](#) / Senior Officer, Land Management  
[Gweithrediadau De Ddwyrain Cymru](#) / South East Wales Operations  
[Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru](#) / Natural Resources Wales

## Item

### Future Work Programme 2026/2027

Item	Background	Reporting Arrangements	Progress / Plans
<b>Standard Items:</b>			
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
<b>Working Groups:</b>			
Improvement subgroup (Proposed)	To be established to support working with local communities to identify future accessibility improvements, initially focussed on Chepstow Park Wood (photo trails) and then Wentwood Forest for example.	Regular report	Model TOR and agreement to establish LAF 11 June 2024; Reconfirmed May 2025. Proposed to start 10 June 2026
Lower Wye Valley Tracks and Trails subgroup	Sub group established to act as part of the Tracks and Trails project steering group	Regular report	Update future meetings
Gwent Access Group	To participate in the regional access group as required (currently dormant)	Report as required	As required
<b>Work Programme Items</b>			
Review of the existing prioritisation system for public path orders legal orders	To review the operation of the prioritisation system	Report to future meeting	Update future meeting

Bridges	To consider the asset management plan & capital programme	Regular report	Appended list to MCC operational update.
Community Engagement and Volunteering	To consider the volunteering and community engagement programme	Report to future meeting	As needed
Welsh Government Access Reform	To receive any updates on progress on the access reforms	Report as required	Updates as received
Communication to wider audience	Communicating LAF achievements/work to wider audiences	Reports by members for the LAF	As needed
Active travel	Update by Active travel on the work programme, including consultations	Report as required	As required
Large development access	To update on large developments, such as those in the Local development Plan (LDP)	Report as required	As required
LAF contributions	To receive written contributions from LAF members	Report as required	Future Meetings via written contributions



Monmouthshire  
Local Access Forum  
Annual Report  
25/26



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

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# Version Control

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<b>Title</b>	Monmouthshire Local Access Forum Annual Report
<b>Purpose</b>	Annual Report 25/26
<b>Owner</b>	Local Access Forum
<b>Approved by</b>	Chair
<b>Date</b>	10/06/2026
<b>Version Number</b>	1.0
<b>Status</b>	<b>DRAFT</b>

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

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To follow

Phil Mundell, Chair

## Secretary's Report

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This report marks the start of the third and final year of the current LAF, from its first meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024.

The forum has continued to operate with membership above the statutory minimum. The appointing authority's representative changed in Autumn 2025. Councillor Anthony Easson replaced Councillor Sara Burch as the authority's nominated representative on the forum.

Meetings were held face to face in accordance with the local access forum regulations

Meetings were held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2025 and 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026, with public agendas available on the Council's web site. The meeting planned for November 2025 was postponed to 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026 due to flooding across the county.

The 3-year period of appointment expired at the end of November and the Council started to make arrangements for the appointment of a new forum leading to the appointment of new members on 29 February 2024.

The LAF members continued 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, highways, and legal teams with Monmouthshire County Council.

Richard Garner, Secretary

# The Year reviewed

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These are some of the issues where the LAF have advised and been consulted (2025–2026):

## 1. Countryside Access Improvement Plan

The Forum has continued to receive regular updates on the implementation of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP), including service delivery, staffing changes, funding, and partnership working. Particular focus has been given to the ongoing role of community engagement and the work of community links officers and volunteers, which the LAF has recognised as a key strength in maintaining and improving access across Monmouthshire.

The Forum has also considered wider strategic and operational pressures affecting delivery, including limited and short-term grant funding, organisational change, and the impacts of severe weather events on the network. These factors have influenced priorities, particularly in relation to bridge repairs, drainage, and recovery works following storm damage.

Members have continued to support the development of the Lower Wye Valley Tracks and Trails project. Over the year, this has progressed through consultation, site visits, and the preparation and review of a consultant's report, identifying key issues such as erosion, drainage, signage, ecological sensitivity, and conflicting use. While delays in the project have been a concern, the Forum has maintained its support for the need to address these challenges and has emphasised the importance of community engagement and clear decision-making structures.

The Forum has also received updates on accessibility initiatives, including work in partnership with the Wye Valley National Landscape and Natural Resources Wales to improve off-road access. This has included schemes such as PhotoTrails and accessible route development at Chepstow Park Wood, demonstrating opportunities to enhance inclusion by improving information and usability of existing routes.

## 2. Natural Resources Wales

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have continued to provide regular operational updates on forestry management, access issues, and wider organisational changes. The Forum has valued this continued engagement, particularly during a period of significant change within NRW, including budget reductions, a shift in strategic priorities, and reduced capacity within access and recreation functions.

Updates have included ongoing work on tree safety (including ash dieback), drainage and culvert maintenance, wildfire response, and storm recovery works. The Forum has also discussed challenges in maintaining forest road surfaces to an accessible standard and has highlighted the importance of consistency in materials and design to support all users.

The LAF has continued to emphasise the importance of NRW's involvement, recognising its value in supporting effective communication, partnership working, and informed decision-making across the access network.

### 3. Consultations, Projects and Other Matters

The Forum has considered a range of projects and updates relating to countryside access and infrastructure. This has included Active Travel schemes across Monmouthshire, with presentations highlighting the development of strategic route networks, funding processes, and monitoring data demonstrating increased usage for commuting and school journeys.

The Forum has also reviewed its future work programme, reaffirming priorities such as funding, performance monitoring, community engagement, bridge infrastructure, and access to major developments. This has included continued support for subgroup working, particularly in relation to Tracks and Trails and proposed improvement projects.

In addition, the Forum has discussed matters relating to representation and engagement, including ongoing efforts to recruit members from underrepresented sectors such as landowners and equestrian users, and continued improvements to communication, including the use of digital systems and mapping tools.

## Work Carried Out in 2025/26

No	Item	On work programme or additional	When Done
1.	<b>Countryside Access Improvement Plan</b>		
	Countryside Access improvement Grant projects and update	Yes	13 May 2025, 9 September 2025 & 11 February 2026
	Lower Wye Tracks and Trails sub group	Yes	13 May 2025, 9 September 2025 & 11 February 2026
2.	<b>Consultations</b>		
	Maintenance prioritisation scheme review	Yes	13 May 2025
	Local flood risk management strategy consultation (Monmouthshire County Council)	Additional	18 September 2025
	Caldicot Multi-User Route (MUR) Phase 1 (Monmouthshire County Council)	Additional	4 August 2025
	Wales Coast Path - Links and Loops Wales Coast Path - Least Restrictive Access (Burroughs on behalf of Monmouthshire county Council)	Additional	28 March 2025
3.	<b>Other matters</b>		

No	Item	On work programme or additional	When Done
4.	Active Travel Update  Natural Resources Wales land management, forest operations and recreational policy updates  Community engagement and volunteering	Yes  Yes  Yes	9 September 2025  13 May 2025, 9 September 2025 & 11 February 2026  13 May 2025, 9 September 2025 & 11 February 2026

# Future Work Programme

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The future work programme for the new forum was discussed and agreed at the 10 June 2026 meeting and is appended (Appendix 2).

## Role of the Forum

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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 National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural 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

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Monmouthshire LAF Secretary

Richard Garner  
Public Rights of Way Officer  
Countryside  
Monmouthshire County Council  
County Hall, The Rhadyr  
Usk NP15 1GA

Tel: 01633 644855

Email: [countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

More details on the Monmouthshire LAF are available at [Countryside Access - 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) Membership (to May 2027)

NAME	INTERESTS
Phil Mundell – (Chair)	Steering Group member of Chepstow Walkers are Welcome, volunteer walk leader Chepstow Walking Festival, MCC Pathcare Volunteer and Chepstow Walk for Health leader. Interests active walking promotion and volunteering.
Barbara Heys– (Deputy chair)	Walker in the Wye Valley. Links with the WI, Llandogo Village Produce Association and GWT.
Anne Underwood	Former horse rider and now British Horse Society area representative. Previous chair of the LAF.
Anthea Fairey	Chair of the Friends of Castle Meadows, supporting the management of the site, volunteer and educational activity. Interest in education and supporting young people to access the countryside
Councillor Anthony Easson (from 9 September 2025)	Monmouthshire County Council representative
Bethany Handley (To June 2026)	Disability activist and wheelchair user. Experience of auditing and promoting routes for people with mobility impairments and links with disability groups and campaigns.
Huw Watkins	Experience of countryside access issues gained during former police career. Member of Trail Rider’s Fellowship and the Auto Cycle Union and has links with local groups.
Ian Mawdsley	Vice chair of Wye Valley Community Council and a member of the MCC/Community Councils Wye Valley Villages Group (leading on sustainable transport). He walks and canoes. Trustee of GWT.
Irene Brooke	Farms in the Wye Valley Previous deputy chair of the LAF.
Jack Thurston	Chair of Abergavenny Cycling Group and walks cycles and swims. He has been involved in active travel mapping and promotion locally and in the Senedd.
John Askew	The local representative of GLASS (The Green Lane Association) and has previously assisted on developing a voluntary scheme. Links to the 4x4 fraternity.
Kelvin Varney	Rights of way officer for South Wales for the Trail Riders Fellowship and a member of GLASS. He also walks and cycles, and volunteers.
Phillip Allsopp	Founder of Lanvapley Walking Group and an MCC Pathcare volunteer.

Rhys Wynne-Jones	Previously project lead for the joint MCC/Ramblers “Paths for Communities Project” which is promoting voluntary involvement in rights of way in Magor and Undy, Usk and Monmouth. Interest in supporting access for disadvantaged communities.
Sallie Roderick	Llanishen Area Public Rights of Way Group. A public health background and interest in identifying and overcoming barriers to individuals gaining the health benefits of countryside access.
Councillor Sara Burch (to 13 May 2025)	Monmouthshire County Council representative
Shan Lewis	Interest in volunteering, healthy lifestyles and meeting diverse needs. Volunteering links in Abergavenny.
Terence Mead	MCC countryside volunteer, Pathcare volunteer and has links to Gwent Wildlife Trust. He has run stone walling courses.

## Appendix 2: Future Work Programme

Item	Background	Reporting Arrangements	Progress / Plans
<b>Standard Items:</b>			
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
<b>Working Groups:</b>			
Improvement subgroup (Proposed)	To be established to support working with local communities to identify future accessibility improvements, initially focussed on Chepstow Park Wood (photo trails) and then Wentwood Forest for example.	Regular report	Model TOR and agreement to establish LAF 11 June 2024; Reconfirmed May 2025. Proposed to start 10 June 2026
Lower Wye Valley Tracks and Trails subgroup	Sub group established to act as part of the Tracks and Trails project steering group	Regular report	Update future meetings
Gwent Access Group	To participate in the regional access group as required (currently dormant)	Report as required	As required
<b>Work Programme Items</b>			
Review of the existing prioritisation system for public	To review the operation of the prioritisation system	Report to future meeting	Update future meeting

path orders legal orders			
Bridges	To consider the asset management plan & capital programme	Regular report	Appended list to MCC operational update.
Community Engagement and Volunteering	To consider the volunteering and community engagement programme	Report to future meeting	As needed
Welsh Government Access Reform	To receive any updates on progress on the access reforms	Report as required	Updates as received
Communication to wider audience	Communicating LAF achievements/work to wider audiences	Reports by members for the LAF	As needed
Active travel	Update by Active travel on the work programme, including consultations	Report as required	As required
Large development access	To update on large developments, such as those in the Local development Plan (LDP)	Report as required	As required
LAF contributions	To receive written contributions from LAF members	Report as required	Future Meetings via written contributions

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## MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

April 2026

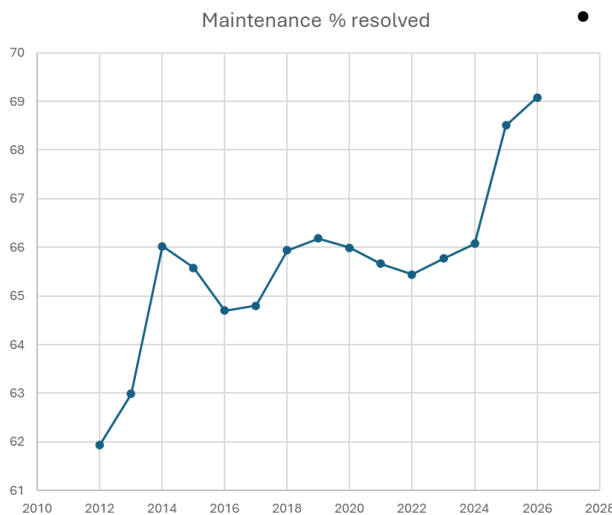
### Countryside Access Service Delivery Update by Countryside Access Manager

Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2020-2030 (CAIP) sets out shared objectives for the county's rights of way network, countryside sites and wider public access. The plan is based on detailed research, analysis and extensive consultation with the public and stakeholders. It is ambitious and realistic about the challenges faced, but contributes to making Monmouthshire a healthier, more prosperous and enjoyable place in which to live and visit. The delivery of the plan is monitored by Monmouthshire Local Access Forum and this delivery update is produced to help with this on-going task.

#### Delivery CAIP 2025-26 evaluation

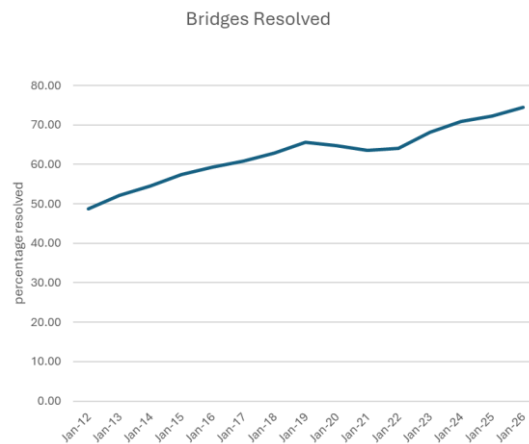
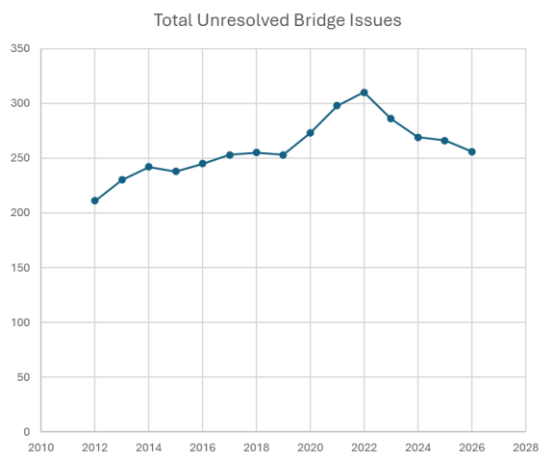
Well Maintained Paths and Sites:-

- Number of maintenance issues being resolved (69.08%) is still increasing.



- Broken down into issues gates (78.15%), 65.76% stiles, signage (52.56%) and bridges (74.53%) have been resolved.
  - The number of reported enforcement issues has doubled in past two years, and enforcement issues resolved is still about static at 55.85%.
    - Achieved 2 Green Flag Awards
    - ODPNT and WCP in good condition and grants partnerships ongoing.
    - GI Site management Plans reviewed.

- 16.5km proactive clearance by Field Wardens and 15km by contractors
- Ambitious bridge programme enabled us to resolve 54 (74.53%) of bridge issues.



## 2025/26 Community Involvement/Well Maintained Paths

Ross Emery was successful in becoming a Community Links Officer to work with Tom Arnold. The post is funded by the Access Improvement Grant to March 2027.

- Volunteer hours recorded for 2025 was 5235.25 hours.
- Community Volunteer Groups installed 84 waymark posts, 30 gates, 13 signposts, 94 steps, resolved 167 safety issues and cleared 13,448m vegetation & 253 overgrown structures.
- We supported 22 groups.
- Held 22 guided walks/ events (including 2 bat walks and a school event) involving 10 trained leaders and attended by 218 adults and 158 children.
- Community Links Officers and volunteers opened routes for walking festival to occur.
- Provided 124 group task days providing skills for community groups to undertake 48 self-supervised days.

## 2026/27 Community Involvement & Partnership Development

This is the second year of the Access Improvement Grant which enables MCC to support volunteer groups with staff, materials and promotion. In 2026/27 the grant looks at making Monmouthshire's landscapes accessible, inclusive and sustainable. We have a target of 80+ gate installations and 100 metal fingerposts to install. The Community Link Officers are developing work programmes with Volunteer Groups with an emphasis on removing stiles and barriers. There will be produced at least 6 videos/photo trails developed showcasing route improvements and different groups.

Some examples of recent work are: -

- Llanishen started ambitious project at Dukes Farm. Signage has been installed and multiple changes from stile to gates are taking place as and when ground conditions allow.
- Grosmont have agreed improvements with 3 new landowners and CADW for their programme removing stiles and replacing them with gates. They also identified a missing bridge. On 27<sup>th</sup> May (after a heat wave talk, shady area identified, suitable clothing, 6 litres of water brought etc) a 3m bridge and stile were installed.
- St Pierre Farm May 2026:- route opened back up following negotiations from enforcement officer, estates and Nobel Foods. Community Link Officers split into 2 teams, with 7 volunteers from Chepstow Walkers Welcome and completed all the works in a day (4 stiles replaced with kissing gates).
- Dyfryn Farm Llanishen Copse Project – Enforcement officer negotiated opening of blocked paths. Three 3m bridges installed by volunteers on 13-14<sup>th</sup> May, leaving 2 gates to install in June.
- Whole section of Usk Valley Walk, from Clytha to Chainbridge, was strimmed by volunteers.

## Countryside Sites –

In March 12 volunteers from the National Grid volunteered over two days at Castle Meadows, saving an estimated £20,000 in contractor costs.

They completed

- Removal of footbridge
- 20m of post and rail replaced
- 100m woodchip path installed.
- 75m stone to dust path
- 2 bridge installations and 75m stone dusting path





### Well Maintained Sites

– targeting improvements for greatest public benefit

**Goytre Hall Wood** - TWIG funding of £108,000 has been received and the project is now commencing. Elliott Waters (Nature Isn't Neat Project Officer) will be the main project officer. There will also be a woodland project officer appointed. A number of tasks will be carried out including a baseline ecological survey, conservation assessment, dormouse and bat surveys, woodland management works, leaky dam works, improvements to paths, disability car parking space developed, improved signage & information, gate changes, new sculpture trail, interpretation boards, improved woodland education and well-being area, bat and bird boxes installed.

As part of the project, we will be developing a communication and engagement plan to guide participation in the project and engagement of the site users and volunteers. A range of activities are envisaged, such as a bioblitz, bat walks, woodland fungi walks, school workshops, tree planting etc. It is hoped that a Goytre Woods "Friends of Group" can be established, from interested stakeholders, to continue to develop and care for the site into the future.

### ACTIVE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

To improve the accessibility of the network and make it easier for people to incorporate walking, riding and cycling into their everyday lives. To support the rights of way network for purposeful journeys.

Balfour Beatty will commence works on Llanfoist to Abergavenny Active Travel Bridge and links scheme on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

As part of the first phase of the project, residents may notice a range of activities taking place on Castle Meadows site, including:

- Works compound set-up
- Works access road
- Construction of working platforms
- Piling - construction of foundations for landing and pier
- Caisson installation (in-river)

On the scheme website you can sign up to the newsletter and view technical drawings and Frequently Asked Questions. <https://abergavennyactivetravelbridge.co.uk/>

#### FUTURE FOCUSED

Working for a resilient and future focused service in partnership with others, to provide wider benefits to residents and visitors to Monmouthshire.

### Legislative changes.

In May, Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Managers and Cabinet Member Sara Burch, met with Catherine Fookes MP, regarding changes to legislation, guidance and regulations that will reduce complexity for users and path managers and realise financial savings for Monmouthshire CC and landowners.

There is a technical environment bill pencilled in for the first year of the new Senedd (July 2027) – though this is subject to the agreement of the new Government. Welsh Government have said they are hopeful to have the many changes required to the administration of PRow included in this (as they are non-controversial and technical). Work is underway on drafting a White Paper which will set out what the Bill will include. It's currently looking to be published for consultation early summer.

A letter has now been written to Lynne Neagle MS outlining the challenges where Welsh Government has authority. Catherine Fookes is using this as an opportunity to raise the Environment (principles, governance & biodiversity targets) (Wales) bill with the new cabinet minister in Welsh Government.

The Local Access Forum may wish to also write a letter of support and interest in any bill which reduces complexity and financial burdens.

## Wales Coast Path

In addition to maintenance grant for the Wales Coast Path, we have been successful in a bid to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for an additional £11,593 towards the cost of diverting two parts of the route at Mathern Palace and Wollastone. Negotiations are taking place with landowners and information will be made available to the public on our public register when the scheme is ready for consultation.

## King Charles III National Trail links to Wales Coast Path

The English coastal path (named King Charles III) national trail is opening in September. A link across the seven bridge from Aust, to the Wales Coast Path is being discussed. It is hoped there will be new signage in place on both sides of the bridge and there will be an event to open the route.

## Links to Newfoundland!

Chepstow Walkers Welcome Chair, Phil Mundel LAF chair, and Ruth Rourke met the Executive Director, Erika Pardy and Melissa Mills (Trail Design and development specialist) of the Great Coastal Trail Authority, Newfoundland, in May. They had travelled around the coast of Wales learning about how we developed the Wales Coast Path, so they could apply lessons learnt to their own Great Coastal Trail.

*The Great Coastal Trail is an ambitious initiative being developed across the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland and Labrador, one of the most remote and economically challenged regions in the province. The project represents a significant step toward building long-term economic resilience, using tourism as a primary driver in regions historically dependent on fishing and forestry.*

*By connecting coastal communities through a world-class trail system, the initiative aims to create new opportunities for local businesses, support population retention, and position the region as a globally recognized destination for experiential travel.*

Chepstow Walkers Welcome were able to talk about a bottom up approach with community development, introduce the concept of Walkers Welcome and talk about the benefits of the route for Chepstow.

## Other News

**Mapping Litter:-** The University of Gloucestershire are developing a project to map litter across the UK. The Wye Valley AONB and MCC Countryside Access think it is a good idea and will be encouraging our volunteers to get involved. Let us know if you are interested.

<https://fast-litter.org/>

## Habitat Heros return to Beacon Hill

Cattle are back on Beacon Hill heathland in Monmouthshire this spring, lending a helping hoof to restore and protect this special landscape.

Eight Australian Lowline cattle arrived on site on May 8 and will spend the spring and summer months grazing the heathland as part of our ongoing conservation in partnership with Wye Valley National Landscape.

Now in its fourth year, the conservation grazing project is proving a natural and effective way to manage the heathland habitat.

By nibbling away at fast-growing invasive plants, the cattle help prevent these species from taking over, allowing a wider variety of plants and wildlife to thrive.

Heathlands like Beacon Hill are rich in biodiversity but need active management to survive. Without grazing, scrub can quickly encroach, shading out smaller plants and reducing the diversity that makes these habitats so valuable.

This year's team of Lowline cattle – including Hamish, Onyx, Geoff, Sam, Banana and Tuesday – are perfectly suited to the job.

Originally from Australia, Lowline cattle are hardy, docile and well adapted to conservation grazing. Their smaller size reduces the risk of soil compaction and damage to sensitive soils, while their varied grazing habits help create a more diverse mix of vegetation and ensure the site is not overgrazed. [Natural Resources Wales / Hoof-powered habitat heroes return to Beacon Hill](#)

## Useful information

[Read more about the Countryside Code](#)

Be adventure SMART [Read how to be more prepared before heading out onto the path](#)

Public Rights of Way Working Map [Public Rights of Way - Public Rights of Way Map](#)

[Countryside Access Improvement Plan](#)

[Countryside Access Policy, Protocol and Operational Management Guide](#)

[Monmouthshire PROW Biodiversity Action Plan](#)

[Visit Monmouthshire](#) details the walks, rides and events that are available, along with accommodation and other attractions.

[Public Consultations including Public Path Orders](#)

**To report a problem**, use our interactive working map link above. Alternatively, you can email [countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk) or write to

Countryside Access, Monmouthshire County Council, County Hall. The Rhaydr, Usk  
NP161GA

**Urgent issues such as a broken bridge can be reported on 01633 644850.**