

VELOTHON WALES
MCC INTERNAL CORPORATE DEBRIEF
THURSDAY 27TH JULY 2017 – ROOM P4, MCC HQ, USK.

PRESENT:

Ian Hardman	Emergency Planning (Chair)
David Jones	Public Protection
Julia Detheridge	Emergency Planning
Ian Saunders	Enterprise
Nick John	Enterprise
Isobel Brown	Usk Community Council
Rhian Cook	Communications
Hywel Griffiths	Commissioning Services (Social Care)
Nicola Edwards	Tourism
Paul Keeble	Highways
Amanda Perrin	Highways – Car parks
Cllr. Bob Greenland	from 11.30am

APOLOGIES:

Phaedra Cleary	Traffic & Development
Abby Barton	Communications
Nigel Leaworthy	Cleansing & Waste
Huw Jones	Transport
Pauline Batty	Community Meals
Andrew Welsh	Highways

1. WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS / APOLOGIES APPROACH

IH welcomed everyone and a round robin of introductions were made and apologies given.

2. DEBRIEF APPROACH & AIMS

IH explained how the session would be run and went through the debrief aims (see below). It was explained that this debrief would be used to feed into the multi-agency debrief being organised by Welsh Government and Run4Wales. It was also explained that Velothon Wales have previously produced a Debrief Proforma – which has been centred around issues they wished to explore and were seeking improvement on. This MCC Corporate Debrief would focus both on any internal MCC issues identified as well as wider issues that could be shared with Velothon / Run4Wales.

Following this debrief – comments would be captured and recommendations identified both to feed into the multi-agency debrief and to assist MCC in being better prepared should the event continue to run.

Debrief Aims

1. To build up a picture of our approach and planning for the Velothon Wales event held on Sunday 9th July 2017. In previous years – Velothon has been specific in how they wish information to be reported back – such as:
Governance Arrangements, Planning structures and Engagement with stakeholders;
Communications & Publicity;
Traffic Management Planning; and
Risk Management, Responsibilities and Accountability.

We have received no guidance this year – but were initially informed that the ‘Formal’ debrief would be hosted in the first week of August. Hence IH intends to look at the event as a whole – and slot in comments based around whatever categories may come from Velothon - to keep this process as simple as possible and make sure as an Organisation we cover all aspects that are important to us.

2. To identify what went well and was successful in relation to the event (good practise) – together with problems encountered (what needs to be avoided) and suggestions in terms of where improvements can be made – and hence recommendations for future implementation.
3. On identifying where such improvements can be made to assign ‘ownership’ of where such lessons identified fall (where possible) – i.e. to a particular service area / individual or our MCC task and finish steering group / or Velothon governance structures - and highlight this in the post-debrief report which can be referred to if the event is held again.
4. To enable us (as an organisation) to provide information that can be fed back into the wider independent multi-agency Velothon Event debrief to be hosted by Run4Wales in mid-August – *date to be confirmed*.
5. Emergency Planning will write up and collate this debrief information – but we will look to Ian Saunders as our strategic lead to produce a final MCC report if this is felt necessary.

IH asked everyone to look at the event in terms of:

- What went well and was successful?
- What were the main issues encountered?
- What could be improved upon and how – what recommendations need to be implemented?

3. WHAT WENT WELL AND WAS SUCCESSFUL?

Event Planning – Ian Saunders

- Marked improvement since Year 1 – significant reduction in number of calls coming into the council.
- No issues with the event at the Three Salmons on the Saturday evening – guests parked on the other side of the road closure. Isobel also confirmed that at the last minute Usk Castle offered their car park for visitors coming to watch the race.

Communications

- Abby put together a Comms and Engagement Update – embedded below – precis as



Communications
engagement review

follows:

- In 2016 Monmouthshire’s opinion was divided. People either loved or loathed the Velothon. However positive social media sentiment about the Velothon in Monmouthshire increased from 21.19% in 2016 to 68.78% in 2017. Negative press mentions of the Velothon in Monmouthshire have dropped from 44.27% in 2016 to 25.95% in 2017.
- Community engagement was started earlier this year and in March a Cycle Usk team was created - including MCC, Velothon, Usk Town Council and local cyclists. An engagement strategy was produced and community outreach work evolved with Usk Primary School and the Cycle Usk team.
- In May the ‘Bike off’ event was held at Usk Primary School and later that month beautifully decorated bikes started appearing in Usk. Over May/June/July up to 100 bikes appeared, the Usk Bike treasure hunt began and bespoke cycle routes were launched.
- Local businesses and residents all got involved and provided their support.

- Cyclists stopped in Usk as part of training.
- BBC2 have been filming in Usk with local children as part of a 'preparation for Wales in Bloom' programme.
- There was positive PR issued to create more positive buzz on the approach to the event.
- Staff engagement – championed with a staff competition to ride in the race.
- Schools engagement was via Welsh Cycling events in local schools (this legacy will continue into September with follow-up sessions planned).
- On the day supporters filled the roads in Usk with a festival feel. Great to welcome TV and press journalists to Monmouthshire. Local businesses opened for business so spectators could make the most of the day.
- Reach of 46,400 generated on the MCC Facebook page and 43,262 impressions on Twitter from the event
- Cyclists were overheard saying 'this place is great' and seemed to be really enjoying it
- Feedback received: "Have to thank everyone in Wales for all the support. In other locations you get tacks on the road. In Wales you get shouts of encouragement, flag waving, bunting, painted bikes lining the route, it was like a stage of the Tour de France. Thanks to all involved on a top event, felt like a pro rider for the day."

Additional comments received from Abby:

- The various initiatives demonstrate the power of partnership working to change perceptions and deliver effective community engagement.
- Participant marketing plan – it was great to get Monmouthshire mentioned in some of the Velothon comms - this can be improved further next year as we have loads of photos from this year which will be really 'campaign-able'.
- Resident communications seemed to run smoothly this year.
- Business communications were a generally improving picture as I think businesses now understand more about the event. There are still some very frustrated businesses in Monmouthshire given the complaints and letters to the editor of the South Wales Argus and Abergavenny Chronicle that have continued this year. It would be good to consider how this can be improved next year.
- Community engagement – the Great Usk Bike Off demonstrated the power of partnership working to drive results. Thanks to Run 4 Wales (R4W) for providing the drinking bottles, supporting on the PR/photography and generally good teamwork. A plan is needed in areas beyond Usk including Llanfoist.
- The event itself was a great day and a wonderful atmosphere in Monmouthshire, the links between us and the media centre worked really well great to see e.g. C4, the TV cameras and press stopping in Usk.
- Structure/membership of the R4W marketing/comms worked well.

Usk Town Council

- The Velothon promoted excellent partnership working with Monmouthshire County Council and R4W.
- The Great British Bike Off was a huge success and involved the school and the community who donated bikes and got involved in the painting party.
- There was a potential appetite for Usk to host and stage their own cycling event in future due to the success of velothon in the town this year.
- Social media worked very well for Usk Town Council – they had 58,046 hits on their Velothon hashtag. Videos created and shared on the Town Council site were well received.
- Comments received were that it was an excellent example of the town council and community working well together for the first time in many years. Local businesses also recognised the benefit of the event.
- Visitors have enjoyed seeing the bikes and the Great Usk Bike Hunt is being continued until September which will extend the reach of the campaign.

- Sponsorship was received for the 'Usk welcomes the Velothon' signs.
- Rachel Rawlings had reported back that older people had been out around the town counting the bikes and that the initiative might be taken forward in other areas.

Highways / Traffic Management

- Not aware of any negative comments. Only problem on the day was relating to the Magor traffic lights. No complaints about potholes this year – the community appear to be more accepting as the years pass.
- Highways Operations were very pleased with the feedback from the teams on the ground and all went according to plan on the day.

Event Control – Run 4 Wales HQ, Leckwith (Nick John)

- From a sports development perspective the event was very successful – especially around Usk. R4W also visited 2 other schools in the county.
- The pre-event tabletop exercise was comprehensive and very useful – went up another level from last year.
- The new event control at Leckwith was excellent – an improvement on 101 House. Wifi, plug in sockets, good mobile phone reception, all teams in one place, live feeds etc. The Traffic Management Company were accessible and provided live updates on roads re-opening. They had a specific team in Usk ready to re-open the road as soon as the last cyclists went through.
- The helpline at Event Control received no calls relating to Monmouthshire on the day.

Tourism

- There were a lot of positive ambassadors in the community who produced content that tourism were able to share.
- Only 17 hits received directly via the links from the Velothon website which was disappointing. However there were more hits on our own web pages promoting cycling in the county – although this could be due to more people generally visiting the improved website.
- No information yet regarding hotel bookings over the event period.
- It is difficult to measure any legacy or increase in profile due to the Velothon but hopefully this will be clearer in the future. There are now cycling routes used for training that we can promote.

Emergency Planning

- Road closure timings were released earlier this year.
- Introduction of the rolling road closure for the pro race meant that the majority of roads were open by lunchtime.
- There were two Public Information leaflets and more detailed maps.
- The MCC supporting leaflet for carers was helpful.
- The MCC Steering group worked well and ensured all corporate issues were addressed. A Run 4 Wales representative attending some of these meetings was useful to clarify information and answer any queries. Naomi Warner from R4W acting as a single point of contact was supportive in addressing concerns raised by the group.
- The WG Steering Group was beneficial to provide a vehicle to challenge concerns from a Velothon operational perspective and ensure accountability was maintained.
Recommendation: The WG Steering Group remains.
- Representation on the Velothon Route group benefitted from an EP rep attending along with a Highways rep. This allowed the identification of wider disruption issues as well as specific road closure details for the Traffic Orders. Recommend that this continues.

- The MCC Velothon Event Support Arrangements was comprehensive and assisted our MCC rep (Nick John) at Event Control as well as other MCC staff supporting on the day. Invaluable tool in understanding the route through Monmouthshire, capturing the Road Closure details, logistical and access requirements and emergency contacts on the day. Actually having an MCC representative at Event Control in Leckwith was essential.
- MCC specific Frequently Asked Questions assisted staff in answering queries in person and by phone.

Safety Advisory Group

- It was a 'safe' event and there was some improvement in documentation received from R4W. There were more toilets provided and Naomi Warner from R4W was quick to respond to queries.
- There was one ESAG for Gwent which recognised capacity issues for other partner agencies.
- Riders who were also on the ESAG reported that they had enjoyed the event and had encountered no opposition along the route.
- Any problems were dealt with at the time and Nick confirmed that any operational issues were dealt with by Velothon Operations teams on the ground who reacted quickly.

Commissioned Services

- Hywel contacted all providers by telephone and followed up with an email. Some had not received any information directly from the Velothon. Hywel has seen 10 providers since the event and they were all grateful for the information we provided. Nick confirmed there were a lot of calls from carers on the day but none were from Monmouthshire.
- Monmouthshire's approach to duplicate information provided directly by the Velothon worked well and will continue for next year.

Monmouthshire Meals

- Information received from Pauline Batty: Everything went really well during this year's Velothon. The organisers were really helpful issuing our staff with passes where needed and assuring they were able to get to work. There were no problems with deliveries and we received no complaints from service users. This year was easier than in the past probably because we are starting to build relationships with the organiser and the lines of communication have improved.

Car Parks

- No complaints received from residents this year – the Velothon were far more organised. The infrastructure and signage in the car park were removed quickly after the event.

Cleansing & Waste

- Information received from Nigel: No problems encountered.

4. WHAT MAIN PROBLEMS / ISSUES DID YOU ENCOUNTER? / WHAT AREAS COULD BE IMPROVED UPON AND SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THIS COULD BE ACHIEVED?

Event Planning – Ian Saunders

- The WG Steering Group was ineffective and rarely responded or addressed issues or concerns raised. Minutes were late and timescales were not met. Other events such as the Champions League took priority.
- It would have been difficult to run the event within Monmouthshire without the MCC Steering Group and the support of all staff involved.
- The Velothon want Council agreement to next year's provisional date as early as possible. If we delay this decision it will put us on the back foot with planning for next year's event.

- It is impossible to gauge the legacy to see if the council has benefitted from any return investment from the Velothon. We need sight of the Economic Impact Assessment Data.
- R4W have been asked to provide a copy of the email complaints they received (180 in total across all 5 authorities) that relate to Monmouthshire but these have not been forthcoming. It would be useful to see the nature and profile of the complaints so these can be addressed.
- Monmouthshire's MP – David Davies has said that he will be riding in the event next year.
- The infrastructure for road closures was put up earlier than the stated road closure times – this led to confusion with residents believing they were not allowed through. Better briefings for stewards and an explanatory sentence on the Residents leaflet could help.
- The Greyhound at Llantrisant were unhappy with the closure and are asking for compensation.

Communications

- A better relationship needs to be developed between the Velothon, the Abergavenny Chronicle and some frustrated residents. The Chronicle are a key title for Monmouthshire CC so closer and more positive engagement with the paper is required in 2018 to help reduce negative PR.
- Direct contact should be made by the Velothon with residents who have voiced their concerns about the event to prevent 'letters to the editor' (Abergavenny Chronicle and Argus), frustrated emails and negativity around businesses not being able to trade due to road closures.
- It would be beneficial to have advance notice of next year's date – although we do have a provisional date – 8th July 2018 – this has not been confirmed due to needing council agreement.
- Frequently Asked Questions should be made more widely available to avoid staff giving out mixed messages.
- Dave pointed out that the council could not be seen to promote one event over another. The Velothon need to be seen as the owners of publicity and engagement.
- In the future it would be a good idea to have a standardised response to complaints about road closures. We are responsible for closing the roads so need to address these complaints. Other issues can then be referred back to Velothon.

Usk Town Council

- Toilet facilities still inadequate.
- Still issues with litter in Usk – one lady picked up 65 empty gel pouches. MCC teams had to pick up litter between the Newbridge on Usk and Usk town in the week following the event.
- Could Maryport Street north car park be kept open using a traffic light system? Is it possible to explore other traffic management options?
- Some businesses are still reporting that they are losing out even though the closures are now only for half a day. Need to collect information on the benefits to businesses so we have evidence to present to people. Usk Town Council could help R4W promote events and provide incentives for businesses.
- R4W did not follow through with support offered to Usk in the initial stages.
- Velothon website was poor and not updated regularly.
- Usk businesses did support the Bike Off – 100 bikes were painted and displayed – only 1 was stolen and 2 moved. However this creates problems with storage once the bikes are taken down.
- Recommendation: challenge R4W litter contractor next year.

Highways / Traffic Management

- There was an issue with the traffic lights in Magor as no 'instruction' had been given to the Traffic Management company for them to be turned off on the day. Nick contacted Paul Keeble on the morning and Paul resolved the issue. An instruction needs to be given to the contractor so they can turn the lights off and back on again when the race has finished this section of the route. The Velothon then needs to be informed that this instruction has been issued. There was no formal Traffic Management Plan where this could have been picked up. Newport put in the instruction this year and the Velothon paid.
- Recommendation: Emergency Planning to support the Highways rep on the Route Group and be proactive in ensuring this 'instruction' is issued next year and clarity over where this responsibility lies is resolved.
- Ian S raised the fact that The Tumble had been re-tarmaced a week before the Velothon – in 2 stages. This created problems for cyclists who were practising for the event as there was dust and tar on the road which could have caused a nasty accident. Need to be mindful of works along the route prior to the run up to the event.

Event Control – Run 4 Wales HQ, Leckwith (Nick John)

- From an operational perspective all went well on the day. The only problem was with the traffic lights at Magor which Paul Keeble sorted but needs to be clarified for next year's race.

Tourism

- No problems encountered.
- Recommendation: Better way to collect entrant's details and a way to feed in to the economic assessment. Did ask this year but didn't happen.
- For the future it would be nice if partners could work towards getting 'Cyclists Welcome' accreditation.

Safety Advisory Group

- Ironman document store was difficult to access initially and then the plans were not put on the site. Version 3 of the Risk Assessment was not issued until 5th July – a few days before the event. No replies from Jeff Protheroe – nothing all in one place.
- No stewarding plan received so unaware of what briefing was given to stewards. Stewards again seemed to be lacking in local knowledge and there were some issues with language problems. Need a pack containing local knowledge.
- Route specific risk assessment should have picked up e.g. Church Street issue in Usk and the Llanccayo travellers site.
- All piecemeal – no overarching documents.
- Contact with pubs generally generated a negative response. Glen yr Afon closed on the day for lunch – reporting a significant loss of income.
- Ian S felt that all the changes at Run 4 Wales – comms / traffic management leads etc. led to poor planning. Everything works locally because MCC manage the event internally and are able to address issues as they arise. The MCC Steering group is vital to the success of the event being delivered locally.

Emergency Planning

- The event plans were not issued within the timeframes given.
- The Magor closure times were confusing and not clarified until quite a late stage and there was an issue on the day relating to Traffic Orders/Instructions for the management of the 'fixed' traffic lights.
- Replies from Run 4 Wales to queries raised were not always prompt or forthcoming.
- Last minute changes to Velothon Plans – need to be made aware when revisions are posted on the Ironman document store.
- Event contacts directory only issued on the Friday afternoon before the event.

- Agendas / meeting notes from the Velothon Subgroups often not circulated until day before the next meeting – hence difficult to keep up with the issues. In addition – some decisions made at these meetings were changed – but not always communicated. Need to include names of attendees on the minutes in addition to the organisation being represented.
- Cost/time spent by MCC staff to assist in facilitating the event. It is difficult to measure the cost benefit of MCC staff time without data provided from Velothon on the benefits brought into the authority area.
- The Tumble was a full day closure – greater liaison with residents required.
- Short route was a surprise! i.e. not agreed initially and introduced after the route was announced and length of ‘short route’ was incorrect.
- Signs still up on the A4042 a week after the event.
- Clarity needed on engagement from within MCC – who replies to complainants? A single voice needed and clarification of individual responsibilities. Sometimes felt that it was not always clear who was dealing with matters arising internally, for e.g. engagement with residents and Traffic Orders.
- With the inability to rely on Velothon sub-group minutes – MCC reps that attend all external related Velothon meetings to note and share key points / concerns with MCC Corporate group as they arise.
- Designated Single Point of Contact in Run 4 Wales for each authority would be beneficial to address issues raised.
- Recognise that Community Councils are only one avenue of engagement – publication of meetings could be wider. Continued engagement with all residents.

Commissioned Services

- All went well this year – left it later to contact everyone firstly by telephone call and then by follow up email. One complaint about Allied Healthcare was raised by the Chronicle but this was unsubstantiated with no evidence. No complaints or issues received on the day.

Car Parks

- No problems and no complaints received from residents over the car park closures. Space needed to be reserved in Maryport Street South car park for the infrastructure to be delivered which had to be done on the Friday as staff don't work on the weekend.

Cllr. Greenland

- Less complaints this year.
- Businesses en-route are losing money each year – could a different route be found for next year?
- Litter seemed better along the whole route.
- Approval for the event going ahead next year will have to be approved by members at full council. If there could be a start in Monmouthshire with agreed benefits then that may sway members to approve it going ahead.
- In Usk only 2 cyclists came through between 12 noon- 12.30pm. Could the road be opened earlier and stragglers go through with care? Road closure advertised until 1.30pm so pubs etc. closed for lunchtime trade when realistically they could have opened.
- Recommendation to Velothon: for the professional race not to go ahead meaning the Tumble could open at lunchtime.
- The Usk Bike Off was brilliant - initiative makes a huge difference to how the event is perceived. A positive event for the whole county.

5. Welsh Government / Run4Wales Debrief

- Welsh Government/Run4Wales will be holding an independent debrief in August (date to be arranged). It was agreed that Ian Saunders would attend to represent Monmouthshire and feed in the issues arising from this debrief – depending on date and availability.

6. Complaints / Compliments from the 2017 Event

Only one official complaint received relating to the small font size on the signage around Newbridge on Usk.

7. Any Other Business

- IH to email service areas not present at the debrief to collate their comments on the event and to add to these notes if required.
- IH to email all service areas involved in the Velothon asking for costs incurred in planning and responding to the event – over and above normal day to day costs.
- **Tour of Britain** – Sunday 10th September. Coming into the county at Skenfrith and making its way down through Llanarth, Chainbridge, Usk, Llangybi and on to Caerleon. The race will be operated under a rolling road closure lasting approx. 30 mins. Usk TC to promote and move bikes along the route.
- Isobel Brown gave her thanks for the invite to the debrief which proved an excellent example of partnership working.

8. Way Forward

- JD to collate Monmouthshire's comments/views and circulate with the group.
- Ian Saunders to attend the multi-agency debrief organised by Welsh Government and to consider a 'final' / formal corporate report which can be made publically available if requested / or required.
- IH thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the debrief.