

SUBJECT: RE-APPOINTMENT OF MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

MEETING: County Council

DATE: 24 October 2019

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All Wards

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To secure the appointment of members to the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum (LAF) for its next 3 year period.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) That the following retiring members of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum be re-appointed: - Irene Brooke, Anthea Fairey, Shelia Hampshire, Phil Mundell, Mark Storey, David Smith and Anne Underwood;
- b) That Sylvia Fowles be appointed as a members of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum in view of her previous attendance as an observer;
- c) That the following individuals be shortlisted for appointment as members of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum: - Jenny Crockitt, Gordon Davies, David Farnsworth; Tracy Hook, Shan Lewis and Martin Sweeney
- d) That a selection panel of three appropriate Members be established and delegated authority to interview and appoint members from the shortlist and to appoint further members should the Forum asks the County Council to seek additional members to reflect any specific interests felt not to be appropriately represented;
- e) That the County Council nominate its representative to serve on the Local Access Forum;
- f) That the retiring members of the Forum be thanked for their valuable contribution.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Monmouthshire Local Access Forum is a statutory body set up to provide advice to the local authority and other agencies including Natural Resources Wales on the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. These bodies have a statutory duty to have regard to relevant advice given by the Local Access Forum. The forum is required to meet at least twice a year, although it usually meets more frequently. In the last year the forum has assisted in the review of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

- 3.2 The Council, as appointing authority, is required to establish and maintain membership of the forum, of between 12 and 22 members, in accordance with regulations. The regulations only allow members to continue until 3 years from the first meeting of each term, i.e. to 25 January 2020 (regardless of when an individual was appointed) and so all members are due for re-appointment.
- 3.3 Following the publication of statutory notices and other publicity applications have been received from 14 individuals. Brief details of these are appended as Appendix 1. The County Council is required to achieve a well-balanced membership reflecting all relevant interests, made up of individuals who meet the suggested criteria for appointment. The guidance allows for interviews to take place, where deemed necessary, to decide upon the persons to be invited to become members.
- 3.4 Having assessed all of the applications it is recommended that the following former Local Access Forum members be re-appointed: - Irene Brooke, Anthea Fairey, Shelia Hampshire, Phil Mundell, Mark Storey, David Smith and Anne Underwood;. It is further recommended that Sylvia Fowles who has attended the current LAF as an observer is also appointed; and that the following new applicants be shortlisted for appointment: - Jenny Crockitt, Gordon Davies, David Farnsworth; Tracy Hook, Shan Lewis and Martin Sweeney and, as on previous occasions, the final selection be delegated to a nominated panel comprising of three appropriate Members. The selection panel will be guided by the relevant regulations and guidance notes.
- 3.5 Regulation 6(1) states that the appointing authority must appoint one member (but no more than one) who is either a member or officer of the authority. The previous representative was County Councillor A. Webb. It is therefore recommended that the County Council appoint a representative to serve on the forum for the next period.
- 3.6 The current number of potential members meets the statutory minimum size. Once appointed and after its initial meeting the Forum may also wish to ask the County Council, as appointing authority, to advertise for further individuals to serve on the forum reflecting any specific interests felt not to be appropriately represented. So it is recommended that the selection panel also consider and determine any subsequent applications arising.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 The County Council is required by Regulations and guidance to achieve a well-balanced membership reflecting all relevant interests, made up of individuals who meet the suggested criteria for appointment. In particular this includes that the membership of the forum achieves a reasonable balance between the interests of users of countryside access and of owners and occupiers of access land or land over which local rights of way exist and must have regard to the need to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, a fair balance between persons of different genders, races, ages, disabilities and other characteristics.

- 6.2 Once in place the forum will be given the opportunity to review its composition and the interests reflected and to identify to the appointing authority if specific interests are under-represented and seek assistance in finding further members to reflect this. (See Appendix 2)

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 The County Council is required to maintain a Local Access Forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and as Appointing Authority to appoint members in compliance with the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 The appointment and administration of the forum is assessed against the statutory requirements and the published guidance.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 To meet the requirements of the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 Members of the Local Access Forum are able to claim reasonable expenses from the County Council in respect of meetings

9. CONSULTEES:

SLT

Head of Law and Monitoring Officer

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and MonLife

Chief Operating Officer, MonLife

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Individual applications to serve on the Local Access Forum

Appendix 2: Equality and Future Generations Evaluation

Local Access Forum Guidance 1: CCW/WAG

11. AUTHOR & CONTACT DETAILS:

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Green Infrastructure and Countryside Manager

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Appendix 1: Individual applications to serve on the Local Access Forum

Irene Brooke

I would like to apply to continue to be a member of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum and I remain committed to the essential functions of the forum.

I have farmed with my husband in the Lower Wye valley AONB for over 40 years. It is a mixed farm with dairy and arable enterprises as well as a dairy processing business.

There is a concentrated network of public rights of way over the farm and it is surrounded by Natural Resources Wales land much of which has open access. There are also a number of promoted routes close by.

I feel I am able to offer a balanced insight into the issues surrounding land ownership, land management and public access in Monmouthshire.

I am a regular recreational walker, a dog walker and very occasional horse rider with a keen interest in the biodiversity of the Wye Valley.

My interests indicate a desire to maintain and improve public access and to protect the Monmouthshire countryside so that it can be enjoyed by all.

I have regularly attended the LAF meetings over the last six years and have contributed to discussions and consultations with regard to the Active travel bill, 4WD use of green lanes, the Welsh Government's consultation Taking Forward Wales and the renewal of Monmouthshire's ROWIP plan.

As a member of the NFU and the CLA I keep up to date with rights of way issues and would be able to liaise with these organisations with regard to LAF matters. I would also be happy to provide my local Community Council with any relevant information.

Jennifer Cockitt

Brought up in the countryside and having the opportunity to both live and work in the countryside since moving to Wales in 1992, I am only too well aware of the benefits for health and leisure which can be available through access to the countryside itself. This especially so in an area well known for its tourism and welcome for recreation and tourism. From my involvement with the BBNP Access Forum I have been interested in efforts to reconcile the varying demands on 'the countryside' encompassing those who live and work here and those with a wide range of sometimes conflicting interests and leisure activities. Trying to reconcile needs and also educate visitors, without preaching, to gain a better understanding of how 'the countryside' and its wildlife works in nature.

I am used to working in a forum or committee format, listening to and trying to understand and reconcile others' points of view having been Chairman for a regional committee of a national charity for 6 years and a committee member for some 20 years during which time I also liaised with the Welsh Assembly Government's relevant committees and discussion groups.

Gordon Davies

My first introduction to the Countryside of Monmouthshire was as a cub, with the highlight of the annual camp at Gypsy's Tump, Bulmore -all too long ago.

At college I discovered a wider range of outdoor pursuits. Then my career in education offered me the opportunity out of school to introduce young people to the great outdoors, However I recognised that I needed appropriate qualifications in the Mountain Leadership Certificate. Over the years many hundreds of young people have begun to share my passion and enthusiasm for both a local and special the environment offered by wild country.

The Duke of Edinburgh Scheme has always been close to my heart and the O.P element provided a challenge encouraging participants to respect and enjoy the environment.

In my final post as Head of Tredegar Comprehensive school I was in a position to ensure that all the Young people recognised and valued what was on their own doorstep. Hopefully the legacy which I left in education lives on across the country and particularly in Tredegar

For me personally , I always sought to use my own local countryside although for many years I have been drawn to wild country of North Wales and Scottish Highlands .The freedom of backpacking across high country has had been my particular love. Now my only regret is that at 76 and with deteriorating knees I can no longer knock off the remaining 50 or so Munro`s outstanding (mountains over 3,000 ft)

I can still manage a good walk (20 miles) and with narrower horizons have come to value more and more what Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons National Park has to offer. Indeed there is something for everybody from a short flat walk along the Canal to a demanding day walk around the Black Mountains.

As Head of a local comprehensive school I naturally served on many committees and groups , including as Chairman of Welsh Secondary Headmasters Association .After retirement I have served for 15 years as a trustee of a significant community centred charity operating in the Welsh Valleys.

With this overall background and commitment I feel well equipped to contribute to the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum and would ensure that I would want see and find out for myself and then make up my own mind about issues which are raised and discussed in the forum.

Whilst I am unable to drive for Medical reasons I do not see this as an obstacle to effectively discharging the responsibilities of the role .Furthermore since I am retired there are no good reasons for me being unable to attend the meetings arranged for the forum

It is my belief that it is the right of every person in the County to enjoy and benefit from the countryside of Monmouthshire and the National Park. At the same time recognising that for the local residents and farm owner or tenant it is their home and livelihood.

Anthea Fairey

I have been a member of the Monmouthshire LAF.

I am Chair of "Friends of Castle Meadows" in Abergavenny. This is an open access area of 22 hectares, which includes rights of way and cycle routes. We aim (with MCC) to make the Meadows an area accessible for all (including those who are disabled).

I'm a walker and a dog walker on routes throughout Monmouthshire.

I also work with Rainbows, Brownies and Scouts in the Abergavenny area.

David Farnsworth

My personal interest in and long standing commitment to local access is based on several factors:

- I live in the Wye Valley AONB area, regularly use the local rights of way, including through NRW forest land and check local footpaths for overgrowth and clear signage
- I have been involved in liaison with MCC and the local landowner/farmer over the successful diversion of footpaths
- I am not a member of any particular organisation (other than a Policy Council member of the Town & Country Planning Association at a national level) and I see the need to balance the interests of all users, including landowners and farmers

Syliva Fowles

I have lived on a smallholding Monmouthshire for 40 years.

My practical experience running the smallholding promotes awareness of the need for land management, and how that can be balanced with, and promote the needs of wildlife and conservation. I am a member of the Monmouthshire Meadows Group which enables members to conserve and restore flower rich grasslands.

I own horses and regularly enjoy riding and walking locally on bridleways and open access land with family, friends and alone.

Since retirement I have been involved at local and regional level with the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA), seeing how horses can provide therapy, fitness, skills development and opportunities for achievement for disabled children and adults.

As a member of the British Horse Society (BHS) I am a local BHS Access and Bridleways Officer for Llangwm, Kilgwrrwg and north Wentwood.

My particular interest is in promoting circular and multi user routes; to encourage spending time outdoors, closer to nature, in order to improve health and wellbeing for all.

I am a member of Monmouthshire Antiquarians and my Local History Group with a particular interest in the historic landscapes of Wales.

My interests include choral singing and recorder playing with Clwb Alawon Magwyr and the local U3A. I am a keen gardener, and a member of the Royal Horticultural Society.

I do speak some Welsh and have joined a Welsh language course with the aim of becoming more fluent.

I have been churchwarden for the parish of Llangwm, which included aspects of administration, organisation, responsibility for the property and obtaining maintenance grants.

My professional qualifications are in Architecture and Computing. Before retiring I was a computer systems manager and have since used my expertise to setup and maintain websites for the local community and the RDA South Wales region.

Sheila Hampshire

As a member of the farming community I have had a lifelong interest in wildlife and the countryside and I feel I can offer the farmers point of view to public access. Having been brought up in large town I recognise the importance of access to the countryside for mental renewal and physical health. I am, however, acutely aware of the conflict of interest between people and nature and I seek to promote respect for both by means of education and facilitation. We farm alongside a stretch of the Usk Valley Walk and our land also borders the River Usk. I value my experience in maintaining both areas throughout the years. I am keen to enable farmers to see the value of promoting their places of beauty in a workable relationship with the general public.

Tracy Hook

I believe that I would be a good member of the LAF as I am passionate about the countryside I live in and believe that it should be accessible to all whether you are able bodied or disabled.

I am reliable hardworking and committed, I can work easily as part of a team and can converse with people from all walks of life.

I have recently been a Trustee for an International Charity/Society so understand what pressures and commitment is required.

I also attended every day at the duelling of the A465 Public Enquiry and played a major part in making sure that rights of way were kept open and/or replaced if they were going to be closed due to the new proposed Duelling road construction. I also attended meetings with Sustrans when they constructed the cycle/walking and bridle route on the old railway line from Govilon to Brynmawr.

We live in a popular tourist County and so therefore I believe it is important that when tourists visit to our beautiful countryside is a memorable one for all the right reasons.

Shan Lewis

I retired two years ago and believe I have sufficient time to commit to Local Access Forum and advise capably in regard to countryside access issues. I feel strongly about promoting the enjoyment of the open air and universal, enjoyable outdoor recreation in Monmouthshire.

I have an interest in the countryside and have been a keen walker (and dog walker) for many years. Although I have no formal technical qualifications in regard to rights of way, I have experience of navigating rights of way, footpaths and long distance routes (such as Offa Dyke footpath). I believe as an access user myself I can reflect the experiences and understanding of those use countryside amenities regularly.

I feel it's important the Forum represents wider community and people of all abilities to ensure safe, enjoyable access for all Monmouthshire residents.

I look forward to working with members of the forum. I believe my previous experience as an Office Manager and Change Implementation Manager will be useful in working closely with colleagues. I have experience within a customer facing organisation of working with internal and external stakeholders including third sector, Local Authority and Government Departments. As a Team Leader I facilitated small working groups, ensuring a participative approach and the opportunity all everyone to contribute.

I have recently moved to Abergavenny and feel it's important to contribute to the community to promote healthy lifestyles via access to the open air, preserving the environment for future generations.

Philip Mundell

As a keen walker, with an interest in the countryside I am, naturally, concerned about the maintenance and preservation of rights of way in the county. My involvement in the maintenance of paths has given me first-hand experience of the issues confronting those whose responsibility is to keep paths open..

I have been a volunteer with Monmouthshire CC Countryside section for the past twelve years. During this time I have acted as a volunteer Path Warden for two Piercefield (Promoted route No. 6) and Devauden/Chepstow Park Wood. In addition I am a regular walk leader of weekend walks organised by Mark Langley. During this period I have received training from the County Council in Path Surveying, Walk Leading, and Emergency First Aid.

I am involved in a number of walking groups including the Lower Wye Ramblers, Chepstow Walkers are Welcome and Walk for Health and lead walks for all three groups. I am proud of my involvement in the Walk for Health Scheme and alongwith my colleagues we have recently reorganised the group to take into account the removal of funding by Welsh Government through the "Lets Walk Cymru" scheme. I believe the Chepstow group is now the only group in Monmouthshire able to accept candidates from the GP Referral Scheme due to success in obtaining alternative funding for insurance cover. I am now an active member of the Chepstow team. The Walk for Health scheme has now been running for eight years without a break.

I am the Path Care Co-ordinator for Chepstow Walkers are Welcome and over the past year the group has received training in stile repairs and health and safety matters. Over the past three years I have completed a number of long distance paths including the Camino de Santiago and the Hadrian's Wall Path and I intend to walk the Francegina Way in Italy next year.

Apart from my involvement in countryside matters I have a long standing interest in Art History and since my retirement I have obtained a BA (Hons) in Humanities and Art History and an MA in Art History. I am involved in the Chepstow U3A Art Appreciation Group and a member of various national art societies. I a past Chairman and President of Chepstow Round Table and a Past Chairman of Chepstow Offa's Dyke 41 Club, where I am a past Chairman.

I have been a member of Monmouthshire's Local Access Forum for the past three years and, I believe, it has taken me almost all of this time to gain an understanding of the nature and working of the Forum. Although, as is apparent from the foregoing, my main interest is walking I am aware of the needs and rights of other parties that need access to the rights of way of Monmouthshire.

David Smith

I do not represent any particular Special Interest Group, but feel that I am representative of enthusiastic unaffiliated walkers.

I am an active walker, and long-term member of Achille Ratti Climbing Club and Ramblers Association. I am currently a countryside volunteer for Monmouthshire, engaged in surveying, repairing and maintaining rights of way throughout the county.

I am also an active member of BWHEG (Blaenafon World Heritage Environment Group), the voluntary residual body responsible for general maintenance of public access to the World Heritage Site.

I regularly survey and lead guided walks on behalf of both Monmouthshire Countryside Department and BWHEG. I am a volunteer leader for a regular Healthy Walking activity group based in Abergavenny

I volunteer on behalf of RSPB, and am one of the leaders of Wildlife Explorers, an activity group for children aged 8 - 12 based in the Newport Reserve. As such, I am appropriately CRB certified, and have received Level 3 Safeguarding training. I have also received training in Rescue First Aid

A Welsh speaker, I was a member of the Arts and Craft sub-committee of the Glyn Ebwy National Eisteddfod.

As an academic sideline, I am a member of the Editorial Board of the Springer Journal "AI & Society", for which I review and amend submitted papers.

I am reasonably fit and am a regular (early morning, 3 times weekly!) user of the gym at Abergavenny Leisure Centre.

Mark Storey

I am a current member of the forum, and am fully aware of the forum's operation and function.

- I have served on management committees (voluntary) in the past, so I'm familiar with procedure (assuming the LAF works in a similar manner).
- Local resident, living in the Wye Valley AONB.
- Walker cyclist and climber (BMC member).
- Some familiarity with local rights of way issues and some understanding of the CROW act.
- I am a reasonable communicator and willing to promote the work of the LAF as required.
- Self-employed, so flexible as regards meeting times etc.

Martin Sweeney

I am engaged in the use of both rights of way and access land both personally and professionally.

I lead groups on walks and courses in the Wye Valley and Brecon Beacons and am a contributor to several national walking magazines. I am also a white water kayaker, caver, rock climber and have previously served as the secretary of the South Wales area of the British Mountaineering Council. I have also been a member of the steering group of the South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group.

My business (Borderlands Outdoor) is a member of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association and I try to attend the members meetings of the association as regularly as I can.

Through teaching outdoor first aid I come into contact with a large number of outdoor enthusiasts and other users of the countryside, particularly mountain bikers.

I believe that all of the above makes me well placed to consult, understand and communicate the views and interests of a fairly broad range of outdoor interests

Anne Underwood

I am currently a LAF member and its Chair and have served in previous LAFS.

I have a good knowledge of rights of way legislation and have been a volunteer British Horse Society Access & Bridleways Officer for Monmouthshire and Newport for many years. I am a member of the Ramblers Association, and have acted as a walk leader for Lower Wye Ramblers. I have obtained a good knowledge of Monmouthshire's Prow Network as a result of my horse riding and walking activities.

As a former NHS registered nurse and hospital manager, I have an interest in promoting countryside access for all abilities and for maintaining and improving health and well being.