

**MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**  
**Minutes of the meeting held at Caldicot Castle on**  
**Tuesday 26 April 2022 at 2:15pm**

**PRESENT:**

**Members:**

<b>John Askew</b>	<b>JA</b>
<b>Irene Brooke (Deputy Chair)</b>	<b>IB</b>
<b>Sylvia Fowles</b>	<b>SF</b>
<b>Shan Lewis</b>	<b>SL</b>
<b>David Smith</b>	<b>DS</b>
<b>Mark Storey</b>	<b>MS</b>
<b>Anne Underwood (Chair)</b>	<b>AU</b>

**MCC:**

**Matthew Lewis**

(LAF Secretary) Environment & Culture Manager, MonLife **ML**

**Ruth Rourke** Countryside Access Manager, MonLife **RR**

**Richard Garner** Gwent Green Grid Regional Access Officer **RG**

**Denzil Turbervill** Commercial Solicitor, MCC **DT**

**Richard Ray** Paralegal, MCC **RR**

**NRW:**

**Sarah Tindal** Natural Resources Wales **ST**

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from members: Anthea Fairey, Sheila Hampshire, Phil Mundell, Martin Sweeney and Ann Webb. It was also noted that Paul Keeble, MCC Highways and Bob Campbell, NRW have also sent their apologies.

**AU** welcomed members to the first face to face meeting of the current LAF. The Chair also introduced Maxine Watson-Whittaker who was attending as an observer having been recently appointed by the British Horse Society as an access volunteer in Newport. Members and observers introduced themselves.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. To confirm and sign the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum meeting of 6 December 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of 6 December 2021 were considered and **IB** proposed an amendment in respect of the item 5 so the agreed action read “The LAF supports in principle the proposed approach to develop an inclusive user-strategy for all lower Wye UCRs and linked public rights of way, *subject to receiving further details*”. With this amendment the minutes were proposed by **MS**, seconded by **DS** and approved as a correct record. The need for a consequential amendment to the draft annual report was noted.

The Chair agreed to take Agenda Item 6 (Gwent Regional Access Group) first:

#### **4. Gwent Regional Access Group**

**RG** explained the background to the establishment of a Gwent Regional Access Group. The Gwent Green Grid Partnership (GGGP) is a collaborative project funded through Welsh Government’s RDP ENRaW programme developing and delivering a common approach to managing green infrastructure, including the countryside access network. The programme strands include preparing a strategic access plan identifying missing links and areas where improvements are needed in the countryside access network, planning, and delivering improvements to support community well-being. To assist this process a Gwent Regional Access Group is being established. Membership will be made up of the local access forums. Each area will be able to put forward 2 to 4 representatives. It is hoped the group will advise on access projects and the strategic access plan and become part of the legacy of the GGGP programme to help coordinate access improvements and support future strategic funding bids. **SL** asked about the group’s practical aims. **RG** advised it would help advise on practical improvements being funded by the programme, help the creation of strategic plan and help develop a long-term vision for improvements across Gwent. **AU** noted there was considerable variation in recorded rights of way across local authorities. **SF** asked if the aim was to encourage more Gwent wide promoted routes. **RG & RR** indicated that there was an open mind on this, that would depend on how the process developed but certainty could include looking at missing links and possibly re-promoting longer routes such as the Usk Valley Walk.

**Agreed** The following members volunteered and were nominated to represent the LAF on the regional group: Anne Underwood; Shan Lewis and David Smith

#### **5. Membership Update**

The Secretary reported that David Farnsworth had tendered his resignation.

#### **6. Staffing Update and LAF Secretary Role**

The Secretary updated members on the creation of a new permanent Community Links Officer post as an addition to the Countryside Access Team. The post will enable and support community involvement. It will lead on working with volunteers, local path care groups, friends groups, Community Councils and others to facilitate volunteer and community input to help resolve outstanding issues, especially those issues that will not otherwise be addressed. The post has now closed and a number

of applications have been received. It was noted that unfortunately the temporary Public Rights of Way Officer post advertised at the same time had attracted no applications and so will now be re-advertised. Should that post be filled it is intended it will take over the role of LAF Secretary.

## 7. Review / discussion on the forum's purpose and future work programme

As this was the first face to face meeting **AU** invited members to reflect on the LAF's role and how it might best plan its future work programme. **SL** supported being more proactive to promote local access in communities, including supporting the role of community councils. **AU** suggested there could be subgroups to look at this, and to encourage greater collaboration in the management of Wentwood.

**RR** outlined how the former user group had worked and suggested a subgroup to help focus the countryside access team's work with communities and support the new community links post would be helpful. Such a group could assist in targeting grant supported work and also feed into the wider regional discussions. The group could if felt appropriate draw in wider representation. **IB** supported any approach that would help break the cycle of locally reported issues important to local communities not being dealt with as they were afforded a lower priority rating. The role of volunteers, both organised and unofficial was discussed.

A number of potential work items were identified. Following discussion, the Secretary summarised the resulting future work programme which would be included in Appendix 2 to the annual report:

Item	Background
<b>Standard Items:</b>	
Countryside Access Improvement Plan (CAIP)	Progress in implementing the approved CAIP
Performance Measures	MonLife Delivery Plan performance measures of CAMS issues (all issues & High priority issues) Available quarterly
Funding	Progress on and opportunities for external funded & MCC capital funded countryside access projects programmes
Consultations	Consultations to the LAF on relevant matters as required
Natural Resource Wales (NRW) updates	Update on forestry operations and access related issues
<b>Working Groups:</b>	
Improvement subgroup (Proposed)	To be established to support working with local communities to identify future improvements
Wentwood subgroup (Proposed)	To seek to re-establish liaison arrangements in respect of Wentwood (with forestry managers and Newport CC)
Gwent Access Group	To participate in the regional access group
<b>Work Programme Items</b>	
Definitive Map Modification Order (DDMO) Claims	To review the number of claims and their prioritisation
Welsh Government Access Reform	To receive any updates on progress on the access reforms
Wye Valley Unclassified County Roads (UCRs)	To consider the development of an inclusive user-strategy for all lower Wye unclassified county roads and related countryside access network

Forest Resource Plans	To participate in the consultation on Natural Resource Wales (NRW) Wye Valley South Forest Resource Plan
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**ST** provided an update on the proposed consultation on forest resource planning which had been pushed back to June. The method by which the LAF would wish to be consulted was discussed and it was agreed that NRW would give this further consideration before making a proposal.

**Agreed**

- a) The forum will establish an improvement subgroup to support working with local communities to identify future improvements
- b) Subject to consultation with Newport CC and other key partners to seek to establish a Wentwood subgroup to re-establish liaison arrangements in respect of Wentwood Forest.
- c) The draft future work programme, as above, for inclusion in the annual report
- d) NRW will consider the most appropriate mechanism for the forum’s engagement in the consultation on Forest Resource Plans

**8. Annual report 2020/21**

The Secretary presented the draft annual report prepared by the appointing authority to cover the first year of this forum’s activity.

**Agreed** the annual report was approved for publication subject to inclusion of the consequential amendment from the amendment to the last meeting’s minutes (as item 3) and inclusion of the forward work programme as agreed under the previous item.

**9. Dates and timing of future meetings.**

The forum agreed that the Secretary will endeavour to arrange the next meeting in July, followed by meetings in Oct 2022 and Jan 2023.

**AU** thanked members for their attendance and the meeting closed at 16:10 pm.

Signed as a true record of the proceedings: .....

(Chair)

Date: .....