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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Local Access Forum held
at Magor and Undy Community Hub, Main Road , Undy NP26 3GD on Tuesday, 11th
June, 2024 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Phillip Allsopp,
Irene Brooke,
County Councillor Sara Burch,
Barbara Heys,
Phil Mundell (Chair),
Sallie Roderick,
Jack Thurston,
Anne Underwood,
Kelvin Varney
Huw Watkins

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Garner	Public Right of Way Officer
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Richard Ray	Paralegal
Ruth Rourke	Countryside Access Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from members John Askew, Anthea Fairey, Bethany Handley, Shan Lewis, Ian Mawdsley, Terence Mead and Rhys Wynne-Jones and from Paul Keeble, Lead Engineer Highways and Flooding, and Bob Campbell Natural Resources Wales.

2. Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

ML welcomed members to the second meeting of the new local access forum and outlined the procedure for election of a Chair and Deputy Chair. Two nominations had been received for Chair and following a secret ballot of those members in attendance Phil Mundell was elected as Chair.

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PM took the Chair. No nominations were received at the meeting for the role of Deputy Chair and in light of that the previous Deputy Chair, Irene Brooke, agreed to take the role on an interim basis pending a further request for nominations and consideration at the next meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

None received

4. Minutes of the meetings of 9 November 2023 and 2 May 2024

The minutes of the meeting of 9 November 2023, the last meeting of the previous LAF, and the minutes of the meeting of 2 May 2023 were approved.

5. Agreement of Terms of Reference and consideration of subgroups

ML indicated that in accordance with the regulations terms of reference, including the establishment of any sub groups needed consideration. The terms of reference, including model terms of reference for subgroups, as last amended in January 2023 were considered and agreed.

A discussion ensued on sub groups. ML outlined progress on the Tracks and Trails project and the desirability of establishing a sub group of the forum to act as the steering group for the project. It was proposed that the sub group would comprise of LAF members, the public bodies involved (NRW, Wye Valley National Landscape & MCC etc.) and other relevant interest. The principle of establishing a sub group was agreed and ML agreed to circulate the finalised strategy in due course to allow members to make an informed decision as to their involvement in the sub group.

Discussion then turned to the potential to establish a further improvement sub group, as previously agreed but not established by the former forum, initially to work with NRW and the Council to look at access issues within Chepstow Park Woods, including seeking resolution of a number of Definitive Map Modification Order claims. The history of these claims and a previous permitting system for horse-riding was discussed and it was agreed that a sub group could usefully be formed to assist resolve outstanding issues. ML agreed to circulate details asking for nominations to the sub group.

6. Discussion regarding additional members and observers (verbal)

ML explained the forum needs to agree any observers and advisors who can attend in addition to the Secretary and the statutory observer from Natural Resources Wales. The forum agreed that appropriate officers from the Council's countryside access, legal and highways teams and from Natural Resource Wales South East Wales Operations team can attend as observers / advisors.

ML outlined that the regulations allow for the forum to examine its own membership and consider the balance of interests represented, and if felt appropriate to ask the appointing authority to seek to appoint further members to address any deficiencies. The statutory maximum size of the forum is 22 members (20 members and Chair and Deputy). There are currently 17 members appointed giving a headroom of a maximum of 5 further appointments.

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After a discussion members identified that additional representation of equestrian interests and of landowners / land managers would be desirable. ML indicated that the appointing authority would therefore seek to identify suitable persons who could bring expertise in those areas.

7. Future work programme

Members discussed the draft future work programme. It was noted that progress was underway to re-establish liaison arrangements at Wentwood with NRW, forest managers and Newport CC. AU indicated that in the meantime she was working on several Definitive Map Modification Order claims for historic routes within the woodland. Members enquired about consultation and availability of information on Definitive Map Modification Orders and claims. RR agreed to circulate links to new registers in due course and noted individual members could ask to be included in consultations on orders. Members also enquired about consultation on any future Road Traffic Orders. ML undertook to ask PK to respond.

It was agreed to add bridges and a review of the prioritisation system to the future work programme, together with an update on volunteering and community engagement, including a future discussion on how the LAF can help support community councils in addressing rights of way issues.

ML will review the work plan as agreed and this will allow completion of the annual report for 2023.

Members asked about continuing receipt of the IPROW (The Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management) Magazine. RR will follow up.

8. Dates and Times of Future meetings

Members present confirmed that afternoon meetings, which had been the general favoured response across all members, would be most appropriate. It was agreed to try to avoid Tuesdays, although unfortunately because of availability that could not be avoided for the next meeting which was agreed as 2.00pm on Tuesday 23 July 2024 to receive a presentation on the outcomes of the Tracks and Trails project, venue to be advised.

Further meeting dates for the 24/25 year to be agreed and circulated.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm

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