

MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

7 November 2024

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

1. GRANTS

1.1 **Wales Coast Path Links and Loops** – An application for a £35,000 grant has been submitted. This project aims to look at improvements to 3 key link routes from the WCP.

1. Caldicot to Caldicot Pill
2. Magor to Rogiet Moor
3. Magor to Magor Pill

All three routes are key destinations within 3km of the WCP and should have access to them. Route 1 could connect the Wales Coast Path to the visitor hub at Caldicot Castle Country Park and on to the town centre. This is a multi-purpose 4m wide path running along the old MoD railway line. It is part of a phased scheme of improving access to Caldicot see MUR plan attached. The 2nd route is along a restricted byway to Magor and the third route from Magor to Magor Pill connects to the town and wildlife site.

It is proposed that a consultant is employed to undertake a comprehensive feasibility study. It will include WCP Quality and Least Restrictive Access standards. As well as consider things like:

- public transport connections
- Any requirements to ensure they are useable and clearly signed.
- Promotion of routes on the ground
- Impact on Biodiversity.

The appointed consultant will provide a consultation opportunity and a final report with all the necessary information to submit a further bid by 31ST March 2025.

1.2 **Wales Coast Path Least Restrictive Access Project** – Experience Community (EC) conducted an assessment of what changes could be made to make various Wales Coast Path sections more accessible for more people, using LRA principles (reports attached separately). Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and Newport City Council (NCC) were then supplied with comprehensive reports to highlight what alterations could be done on the ground to provide more accessible routes. It shows what improvements could be done.

However, in reality there are various restrictions and considerations needed to be covered before any work could be proposed on the ground, including; engagement with landowners, advice from groups (e.g. Disabled Ramblers, local community), land restrictions/designations (e.g. SSSI, Cadw) and relevant consultation.

It has been proposed that a Consultant is employed on a contract in order to undertake a feasibility report on how the work could be implemented, to include a costed analysis of ground work. There are 2 locations we propose to request the consultant to work on;

1. MCC: Rogiet to Black Rock as a circular route
2. NCC: Newport Wetlands

We propose to let a tender under MCC's procurement procedure using Sell to Wales for both sections and this will provide a regional collaborative approach.

The final report would be completed by 31st March 2025. It will complement the work being undertaken with Network Rail at Rogiet Country Park and the Wales Coast Path Links and Loops project.

- 1.2 **Access Improvement Grant** - This is the final year of a three-year grant relating to the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2025.
- 1.3 A training video has been made with Bethany Handley to show volunteers and others what to consider. A short social media message was also recorded. Whilst this was being recorded a video about Goytre Hall Woods was also made.

Other training video a that are in production are

- how to install a stile
- how to install a gate.

These last two are particularly important as this year we have delivered lots of structures to landowners who have requested more information. They will compliment the technical manual we already have and other authorities such as Powys, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire have requested to use it when it becomes available.

Volunteering – Up until the end of this October , in this financial year, Tom Arnold the Community Links Officer has completed 63 task days with volunteer groups. They have installed 36 waymark posts, 29 gates, 19 fingerposts, 40 steps and dealt with 101 safety issues, cleared 206 overgrown stiles/gates and cleared 5265m of vegetation. 3,355 m of which were

strimmed by volunteers who had training last year. This has involved 1188 hours of volunteer time.

1.5 Bridges

1.51 There are 1362 bridges as of 9 September on Monmouthshire's network. 282 of which need repair or replacement. There are 40 bridges closed by formal notice and others closed by the virtue of the bridge being missing. Bridges are only closed when they are known to be dangerous or to carry out works on them.

Some communities are worst affected by bridge closures or missing bridges than others.

COMMUNITY	Total No of Bridges	Unresolved
Llanhennock	114	8
Trellech United	57	12
Raglan	58	17
Llantilio Crossenny	70	26
Llanover	60	24
Llangattock vibon avel	90	34
Llanarth	35	19
Grosmont	87	32
Devauden	58	18
Mitchell Troy	85	20
Llantrisant Fawr	22	10
Shirenewton	22	9
Gwehelog	11	8
Llangwm	26	8
Llanbadoc Fawr	23	6
Llangybi	42	7
Monmouth	46	6
Tintern	21	5
Abergavenny	13	2
Crucorney	19	1
Goytre Fawr	12	1
Magor with Undy	11	3
Mathern	24	2
Caerwent	5	1
Caldicot	4	0

Chepstow	4	0
Llanfoist Fawr	3	1
Portskewett	3	0
Usk	2	1
St Arvans	1	0
Llandavenny	0	0
Llanelly	0	0
Rogiet	0	0

Bridges are predominantly the responsibility of Monmouthshire County Council.

All bridge work is prioritised according to the prioritisation used for all maintenance and enforcement issues and includes risk, usage, promotion and inconvenience. But when it comes to replacement, it also includes the possibility of diverting a path, whether there is another bridge nearby, cost and complexity. The benefits of replacing each bridge to the public as a whole are therefore very much taken into account when prioritising which bridges should be replaced first. However bridges are replaced out of order where grant conditions allow us to purchase or install a bridge as a part of for particular projects.

This year the bridge programme has been at the expense of other things getting done particularly with maintenance and grant projects. The bridge programme we are currently working on is the removal of 10 bridges. By removing the structure off site, it removes our public liability if a member of the public attempts to use the bridge to cross the water course. It will also mean that we won't need to continue issuing closure notices every 6 months reducing both admin costs and time commitment from staff.

1. 369/1, Hog's Head to Newhouse, Length - 18 metres(m)
2. 374/817, Cwmcarvan (Hay Bale), Length – 8 m
3. 368/23, Hunt Kennels, Pen yr Heol, Length – 9m
4. 374/25, Trefaldu Fishing Ponds, Length – 10m
5. 359/437, Glen Trothy, Length – 9m
6. 359/733, Lower Celliau, Length – 10m
7. 369/199, Sunnybank Farm (off driveway), Length – 12m
8. 372/103, Pill Farm Sewage Works, Length - 6.5m
9. 364/224, Llan Adan, Length – 8m
10. 369/269, TalyCoed, Length – 10m

Replace

It is proposed that the following bridges are removed and replaced with new steel beamed bridges and where necessary placed on steel H-frames.

1. 375/286, Dixton Church, Wye Valley Walk, Length – 7.5m
2. 371/114, Llantrisant Underpass to Yew Tree Cottage, Length – 6.5m
3. 366/18, Ton y Bedw, Length – 3m (possibly Field Wardens install)
4. 359/134, Trevyr, Grosmont, Length – 7.5m
5. 359/750, Roanoak, Grosmont, Length – 7.5m
6. 357/497, Wern, llansoy, Length – 6.5m
7. 366/371, Walnut Tree Farm, Llandegveth, Length – 6m
8. 373/231, Wales Coast Path Railway crossing to Tuttymead Wood, Length – 7m
9. 377/244, The Cayo, Raglan, Length – 6m
10. 382/997, Woolpitch Wood, Trellech, Length – 6.5m
11. 357/169, Llangunnog, Tor y Mynydd, Length – 7m
12. 359/580, Little Pool Hall, off Offas Dyke National Trail, Length – 10m
13. 360/75, Coedcae, The Bont, Length – 8m
14. 377/458, Old Llanishen Farm to The Homestaed, Length – 4m (possibly Field Wardens install)
15. 374/99, Lower Llantrothy, Length – 4.5m (possibly Field Wardens install)

Further Assessment

The following bridges will be surveyed and assessed using a qualified structural engineer to provide reports on the feasibility of a new bridge along with costings to carry out such works.

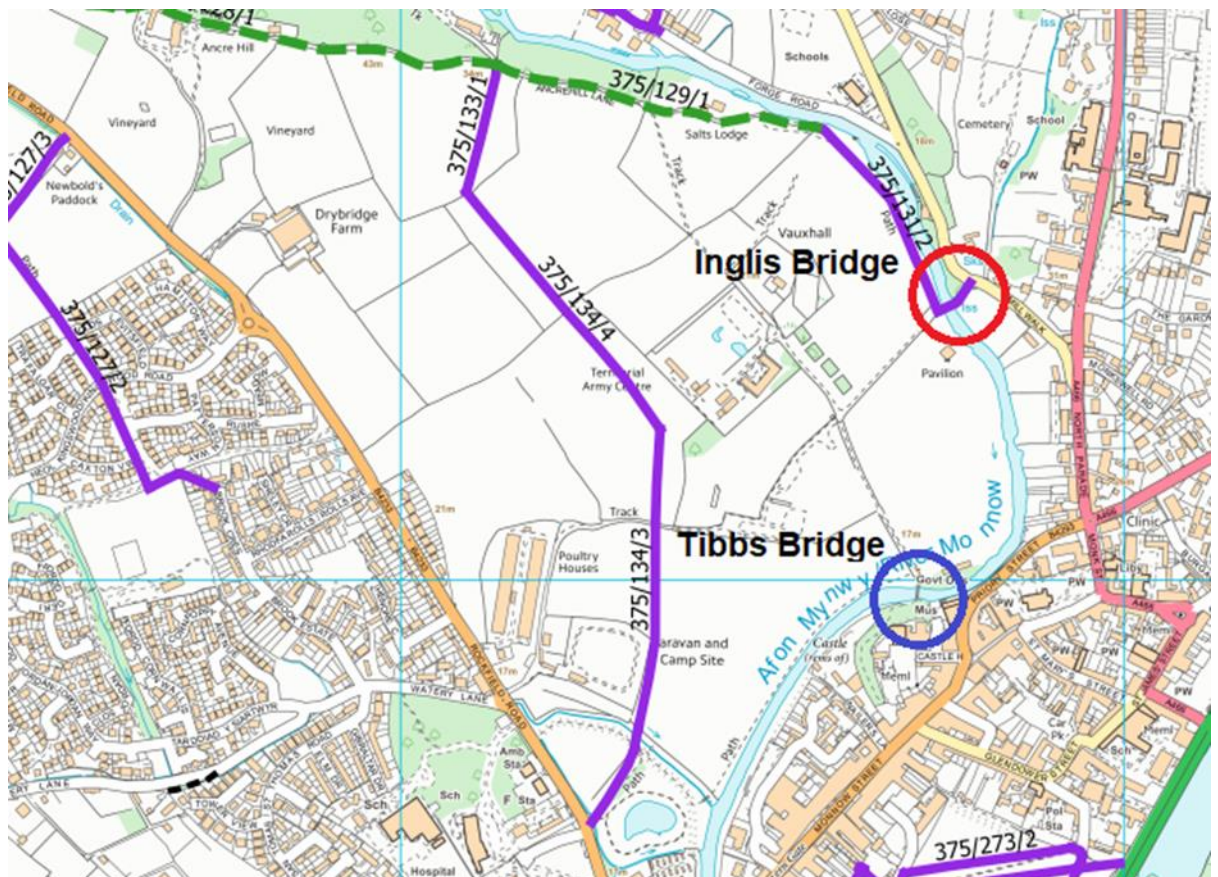
1. 359/568, Crossways to Mill Farm Bridleway Bridge, Length 10m
2. 369/269, Talycoed, Length – 10m
3. 369/1, Hog's Head to New House, Length – 18m
4. 369/199, Sunnybank Farm, Length – 12m

1.52 Specific Bridge Projects

In March 2023 the Treadam bridge (Pant y Colyn Farm 359/239/1) was removed due to dangerous piers. A diversion is currently in place and is well signed. The works on the banks are nearing completion and the new bridge has been installed. However the ramps still need repair and issues have been caused by flooding and the wet weather.



1.5.2 **Inglis Bridge Monmouth** – This is a Grade II Listed Structure owned by the MoD over which Footpath 131 Monmouth runs, connecting Vauxhall Fields to Osbaston.



Inglis Bridge was built in 1931 to replace an old wooden bridge called the white bridge that was built in 1905. It was built by the NO.2 Company of the Monmouthshire Regiment. It was maintained by the MoD because it marked the entrance to the headquarters of the Royal Monmouthshire Engineers at Vauxhall Field. It was last refurbished in 1998 by the same regiment.

Although Inglis Bridge is a vehicular bridge, it has been closed to vehicles for some time. The bridge is a listed structure and is extremely well used. It provides user friendly access to Vauxhall Fields and to the school. It is also been identified as an Active Travel , Future Walking and Cycling Route.

image of the Inglis Bridge prior to its closure to vehicles.



The Footpath was initially closed with an emergency closure notice dated 13th September 2024 but is now closed by temporary traffic regulation order for up to 6 months.

The bridge was closed following an MoD inspection that revealed the following defects:

- Timber deck boards are rotten in multiple locations.
- A supporting transverse timber beam is missing.
- The mesh surface to the timber deck is lifting in several locations and due to the rotten deck boards, cannot be fixed down and so now present a trip hazard.
- Several timber edge beams are also suffering advanced stages of rot.

An alternative route via Tibbs bridge exists on the ground but this route does not carry recorded public access rights and is not as accessible or convenient. A local petition with over a 1000 names has been submitted requesting urgent action.

The Countryside Access Service are liaising with the MoD regarding the costs (estimated at £360,000) , timetable and a partnership approach to ensure that the bridge is repaired urgently.

Llangua Bridge Grosmont - WSP have been commissioned by Monmouthshire County Council to assess potential replacement crossing points for footpath 116, Grosmont, across the River Monnow near Llangua, which was removed in 2017 due to the unsafe condition of the bridge.

Final reports are expected by end of this month, but the Geomorphological study has shown three possible locations for a new bridge only one of which is in Monmouthshire and none of these are in the same location as where the original bridge was located.

Welsh Government Legislative Changes Update

Monmouthshire County Council has been contributing to the Welsh Government Digital Working Group which was set up to look at producing an All Wales Digital Map. Two meetings have occurred todate.

As background, the key purpose of the DMWG is to provide expert technical advice on the development of a single statutory map of areas legally accessible to the public in Wales that are used primarily for outdoor recreation.

To start this journey towards a single statutory map of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in Wales, the Welsh Government Geography Team (DataMapWales (DMW)) have offered to unify any digital spatial datasets of PRoW and essential permissive PRoW into a single digital map, held by Local Authorities or National Park Authorities. This map will then act as a digital working copy for PRoW in Wales.

DMW will manage this working copy and make it available to local authorities to use on its own, or in combination with other datasets that will be made available to you on DMW, or that you hold yourselves, such as flood alleviation, housing development, areas of deprivation, etc...

Welsh Government intend holding a number of virtual stakeholder engagement events in the second half of January 2025 to explain their plans in more detail, and to showcase the digital map we are aiming to produce as a 1st phase. These events will also allow them to outline some of the map's applications and how they will be beneficial to organisations.

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