

MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

9th September 2025

Countryside Access Service Update by Countryside Access Manager

Budget/staff changes

- Julie Bloomfield site assistant has retired. Field Wardens are covering inspections of sites at present.
- Morag Sinton has taken a leave of absence for one year starting from 1st September. The Volunteer Co-ordinator role is currently being advertised.
- A new Community Links Officer role is being advertised and interviews will take place on 12th September. This role is paid from Access Improvement Grant and will work with Tom Arnold to facilitate doorstep opportunities, including improving and promoting access for all.
- Jack Capon has started as Assistant Public Rights of Way Officer, 2 days a week. This role is shared with Gavin Pugh (3 days).
- Colette Bosley has taken over from Matthew Lewis as Countryside, Destination and Environment Manager
- The Council is restructuring and Countryside Access is moving to a new Directorate called Place, Communities and Well-being. Craig O'Connor has been appointed Chief Operating Officer. Further information will be provided at November's meeting when the changes have been fully implemented.

Legislative changes

[**Sustainable Farming Scheme \(SFS\) 2026: scheme description**](#)

The Sustainable Farming Scheme will begin on 1 January 2026 with the application form for the Universal layer of the scheme being available on the Single Application Form (SAF) via Rural Payments Wales (RPW) Online from March through to 15 May each year. Click the heading to read the final description of the Sustainable Farming Scheme in full.

Written Statement: Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) – Final Scheme description

PRoW and public access have successfully been included within the regulatory baseline and are offered as an optional action.

A meeting is arranged between Welsh Government Designated Landscapes and Local Authorities countryside departments. It will be an opportunity for us to share practical ideas and suggestions specifically on how we ensure the regulatory baseline is adhered to and what involvement/information Local Authorities will need.

Information on the regulatory baseline and the optional action are included below.

Regulatory Baseline

- in accordance with the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network you should adhere to the legal responsibilities on landowners to ensure the network is open, accessible, and safe for public use.
- you must manage Open Access land appropriately as set out in the Countryside Rights of Way Act, 2000.

Optional Action - Improved public access to the countryside

Enable people to access the countryside and enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of exploring nature and our farmed environment

Aims

This theme is designed to improve the accessibility of the farmed environment, encourage responsible recreation and improve the visitor experience. This can strengthen the link between the consumer and how their food is produced.

Benefits

This is an opportunity to improve signage or access furniture on farms. This means there are fewer barriers to people enjoying the outdoors safely. It also provides an opportunity to improve the visitor experience and reinforce messages about safe and responsible use of the countryside. This benefits visitors, farmers and livestock.

Support

As part of this Optional Action, WG will fund one-off capital items with a focus on improving accessibility (with an emphasis on least restrictive access) and / or improving the visitor experience. This could involve funding to:

- remove stiles where security of livestock is not needed
- replace stiles with gates
- install seats / benches at viewpoints
- install information boards to highlight:

- elements of the Countryside Code such as reminders to keep dogs on lead, no littering, or the importance of closing gates
- educational, cultural or landscape points of interest

Where possible we will promote existing Local Authority processes to support these activities.

This action is not designed to fund compliance with access legislation relating to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) or the Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act which must be met as part of the SFS Regulatory Baseline.

Ongoing development

Future development of this Optional Action could include support to improve the quality and / or quantity of rights of way both on an individual holding and on a collaborative basis. See Collaborative theme Collaborative Landscape Scale Activity.

[Introduction of the Environment \(Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets\) \(Wales\) Bill \(2 June 2025\) | GOV.WALES](#)

New Law - The Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets are finally out. This provides a new legal framework of accountability and enforcement for environmental laws in Wales.

There are four environmental principles – precaution, prevention, rectification at source and polluter pays – will be embedded in Welsh law, along with a duty on Welsh ministers and Natural Resources Wales to build these into their policy making.

A new environmental watchdog will be established – the Office of Environmental Governance Wales (OEGW) – to hold Welsh Ministers and public authorities to account on their compliance with environmental law, including through enforcement in the High Court if necessary. The OEGW will also provide advice to Welsh Ministers and monitor the application and effectiveness of environmental law across Wales.

The independence of the OEGW is likely to be a hot topic over the coming months, as Welsh Ministers want to appoint the body's Chair and other board members, with little input from the Senedd. At present, there is no provision in the bill to safeguard the body's independence or financial security, as there is in English and Scottish legislation.

A framework to set biodiversity targets is included in the bill, although there is no headline target to drive immediate action on nature recovery, and the first targets are

not due until three years after the bill has passed.

Countryside Sites

Annual tree inspections have been carried out at our 9 sites. Assessments are made regarding the health and safety of the trees on our managed sites. Disease and the dry weather have had an impact. Issues such as Ash dieback, or any limb damage as a result of high winds etc. are recorded. Any trees which under the QTRA assessment are deemed a danger to the public are logged and work programmed.

Two Green flag awards have been received for Castle Meadows and Rogiet Country Park

An application has been made to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for TWIG grant. This project would involve:

- establishing a Friends of Group at Goytre Hall Woods,
- accessibility and signage improvements,
- removing the ash and establishing an open glade which volunteers could plant with native species and other woodland management improvements.
- Establishing leaky dams
- Improvements to outdoor learning area
- Green Skills Training, such as providing outdoor curriculum training
- Communications
- Dog campaign
- Updating Goytre Hall Wood Management Plan

Bridges

During the month of August contractors have been busy. In total 7 bridges have now been removed and replaced with steel beamed bridges which we hope will increase the longevity of the bridges. These 7 bridges have been subject to closure notices these notices can now be removed and the paths re-opened. The photographs show the type of bridges we have installed.

The 7 bridges have been installed at:

- Trevyr and Roan Oak in the Grosmont area
- Llansoy
- Llangunnog
- Wallstone Farm adjacent to the WCP (neighbouring St Pierre Golf Club)

- The Bont
- Woolpitch Wood

We are hoping to get a further 5+ bridges installed in the next couple of weeks. Landowner permissions have been granted, and the contractor has scheduled dates for installation



4 large bridges at Crossway, New House, Tal y Coed and Sunnybank have been surveyed to gather relevant information for their replacements and we are now awaiting results from the geomorphological studies.

Bridges have been removed at:

- Cwmcarvan
- Trefaldu Fishing ponds
- Glen Trothy

- Sunnybank and Talycoed
- Pill Farm (near the WCP close to the Newport border)

All these bridges were in a very poor condition and the Council could be liable if members of the public tried using them. 4 other bridges are to be removed in September.

Vegetation Clearance

Ongoing clearance work has been carried out by Volunteers, Wardens and Contractors across the network. Clearance work has been carried out on local routes, promoted routes eg Wye Valley Walk and National Trails such as ODNT and WCP.



Example of vegetation clearance on Offa's Dyke Path National Trail.

The Wales Coast Path app: Record, Save and Track your walks

Ever wondered whether you are literally on the right path? Want to save your walks and check your progress?

[Read more about The Wales Coast Path app](#)- designed to keep you on the path by showing where you are on a map, record walks you've done in the past into the app and keep track of your overall progress. It's great way to stay motivated and see where else you need to tick off!



Want a more simpler way of tracking your progress? Try the [Wales Coast Path Passports](#), one for each of the 8 regions of the path where you can tick off and date each completed section - either electronically or printed off.

Are you a business along the coast path?

If so, there is a business newsletter with useful information on how you can make the most of the path for your business. You'll receive info on the available resources to help you *and* your customers.

Click Subscribe below and answer Yes to the question "Are you a business owner?" to receive NRW's business updates. [Subscribe to business newsletter](#)



Events See what's happening on the path with NRW's [online events calendar](#).

Have you got an event on or near the Wales Coast Path? Submit a [Suggest an Event form](#) to NRW and they will promote it on the website (subject to approval). You can also approach Monmouthshire's Countryside access or Destination Management Team to promote an activity on Visit Monmouthshire.

Useful information

[Read more about the Countryside Code](#)

Be adventure SMART [Read how to be more prepared before heading out onto the path](#)

Public Rights of Way Working Map [Public Rights of Way - Public Rights of Way Map](#)

[Countryside Access Improvement Plan](#)

[Countryside Access Policy, Protocol and Operational Management Guide](#)

[Monmouthshire PROW Biodiversity Action Plan](#)

[Visit Monmouthshire](#) details the walks, rides and events that are available, along with accommodation and other attractions

[Public Consultations including Public Path Orders](#)

To report a problem use our interactive working map link above. Alternatively you can email countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk or write to



Countryside Access, Monmouthshire County Council, County Hall. The Rhydr, Usk
NP161GA

**Urgent issues such as a broken bridge can be reported on 01633
644850**