

MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

April 2026

Countryside Access Service Delivery Update

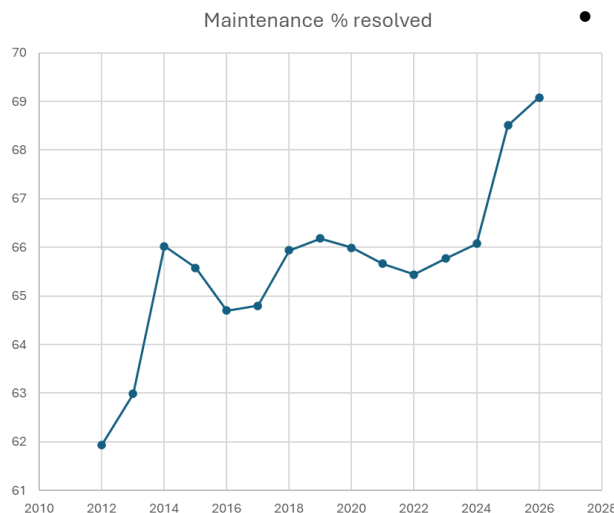
by Countryside Access Manager

Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2020-2030 (CAIP) sets out shared objectives for the county's rights of way network, countryside sites and wider public access. The plan is based on detailed research, analysis and extensive consultation with the public and stakeholders. It is ambitious and realistic about the challenges faced, but contributes to making Monmouthshire a healthier, more prosperous and enjoyable place in which to live and visit. The delivery of the plan is monitored by Monmouthshire Local Access Forum and this delivery update is produced to help with this on-going task.

Delivery CAIP 2025-26 evaluation

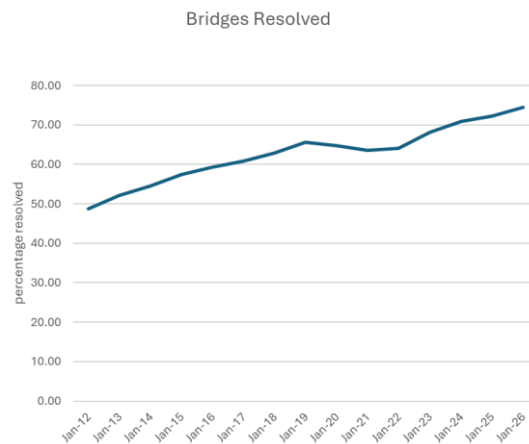
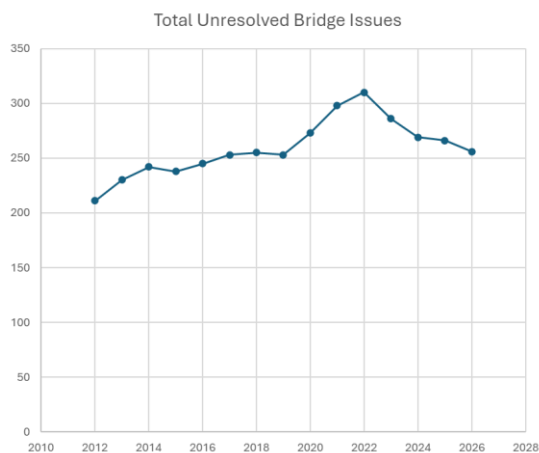
Well Maintained Paths and Sites:-

- Number of maintenance issues being resolved (69.08%) is still increasing.



- Broken down into issues gates (78.15%), 65.76% stiles, signage (52.56%) and bridges (74.53%) have been resolved.
 - The number of reported enforcement issues has doubled in past two years, and enforcement issues resolved is still about static at 55.85%.
 - Achieved 2 Green Flag Awards
 - ODPNT and WCP in good condition and grants partnerships ongoing.
 - GI Site management Plans reviewed.

- 16.5km proactive clearance by Field Wardens and 15km by contractors
- Ambitious bridge programme enabled us to resolve 54 (74.53%) of bridge issues.



2025/26 Community Involvement/Well Maintained Paths

Ross Emery was successful in becoming a Community Links Officer to work with Tom Arnold. The post is funded by the Access Improvement Grant to March 2027.

- Volunteer hours recorded for 2025 was 5235.25 hours.
- Community Volunteer Groups installed 84 waymark posts, 30 gates, 13 signposts, 94 steps, resolved 167 safety issues and cleared 13,448m vegetation & 253 overgrown structures.
- We supported 22 groups.
- Held 22 guided walks/ events (including 2 bat walks and a school event) involving 10 trained leaders and attended by 218 adults and 158 children.
- Community Links Officers and volunteers opened routes for walking festival to occur.
- Provided 124 group task days providing skills for community groups to undertake 48 self-supervised days.

2026/27 Community Involvement & Partnership Development

This is the second year of the Access Improvement Grant which enables MCC to support volunteer groups with staff, materials and promotion. In 2026/27 the grant looks at making Monmouthshire's landscapes accessible, inclusive and sustainable. We have a target of 80+ gate installations and 100 metal fingerposts to install. The Community Link Officers are developing work programmes with Volunteer Groups with an emphasis on removing stiles and barriers. There will be produced at least 6 videos/photo trails developed showcasing route improvements and different groups.

Some examples of recent work are: -

- Llanishen started ambitious project at Dukes Farm. Signage has been installed and multiple changes from stile to gates are taking place as and when ground conditions allow.
- Grosmont have agreed improvements with 3 new landowners and CADW for their programme removing stiles and replacing them with gates. They also identified a missing bridge. On 27th May (after a heat wave talk, shady area identified, suitable clothing, 6 litres of water brought etc) a 3m bridge and stile were installed.
- St Pierre Farm May 2026:- route opened back up following negotiations from enforcement officer, estates and Nobel Foods. Community Link Officers split into 2 teams, with 7 volunteers from Chepstow Walkers Welcome and completed all the works in a day (4 stiles replaced with kissing gates).
- Dyfryn Farm Llanishen Copse Project – Enforcement officer negotiated opening of blocked paths. Three 3m bridges installed by volunteers on 13-14th May, leaving 2 gates to install in June.
- Whole section of Usk Valley Walk, from Clytha to Chainbridge, was strimmed by volunteers.

Countryside Sites –

In March 12 volunteers from the National Grid volunteered over two days at Castle Meadows, saving an estimated £20,000 in contractor costs.

They completed

- Removal of footbridge
- 20m of post and rail replaced
- 100m woodchip path installed.
- 75m stone to dust path
- 2 bridge installations and 75m stone dusting path





Well Maintained Sites

– targeting improvements for greatest public benefit

Goytre Hall Wood - TWIG funding of £108,000 has been received and the project is now commencing. Elliott Waters (Nature Isn't Neat Project Officer) will be the main project officer. There will also be a woodland project officer appointed. A number of tasks will be carried out including a baseline ecological survey, conservation assessment, dormouse and bat surveys, woodland management works, leaky dam works, improvements to paths, disability car parking space developed, improved signage & information, gate changes, new sculpture trail, interpretation boards, improved woodland education and well-being area, bat and bird boxes installed.

As part of the project, we will be developing a communication and engagement plan to guide participation in the project and engagement of the site users and volunteers. A range of activities are envisaged, such as a bioblitz, bat walks, woodland fungi walks, school workshops, tree planting etc. It is hoped that a Goytre Woods "Friends of Group" can be established, from interested stakeholders, to continue to develop and care for the site into the future.

ACTIVE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

To improve the accessibility of the network and make it easier for people to incorporate walking, riding and cycling into their everyday lives. To support the rights of way network for purposeful journeys.

Balfour Beatty will commence works on Llanfoist to Abergavenny Active Travel Bridge and links scheme on 8th June 2026.

As part of the first phase of the project, residents may notice a range of activities taking place on Castle Meadows site, including:

- Works compound set-up
- Works access road
- Construction of working platforms
- Piling - construction of foundations for landing and pier
- Caisson installation (in-river)

On the scheme website you can sign up to the newsletter and view technical drawings and Frequently Asked Questions. <https://abergavennyactivetravelbridge.co.uk/>

FUTURE FOCUSED

Working for a resilient and future focused service in partnership with others, to provide wider benefits to residents and visitors to Monmouthshire.

Legislative changes.

In May, Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Managers and Cabinet Member Sara Burch, met with Catherine Fookes MP, regarding changes to legislation, guidance and regulations that will reduce complexity for users and path managers and realise financial savings for Monmouthshire CC and landowners.

There is a technical environment bill pencilled in for the first year of the new Senedd (July 2027) – though this is subject to the agreement of the new Government. Welsh Government have said they are hopeful to have the many changes required to the administration of PRow included in this (as they are non-controversial and technical). Work is underway on drafting a White Paper which will set out what the Bill will include. It's currently looking to be published for consultation early summer.

A letter has now been written to Lynne Neagle MS outlining the challenges where Welsh Government has authority. Catherine Fookes is using this as an opportunity to raise the Environment (principles, governance & biodiversity targets) (Wales) bill with the new cabinet minister in Welsh Government.

The Local Access Forum may wish to also write a letter of support and interest in any bill which reduces complexity and financial burdens.

Wales Coast Path

In addition to maintenance grant for the Wales Coast Path, we have been successful in a bid to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for an additional £11,593 towards the cost of diverting two parts of the route at Mathern Palace and Wollastone. Negotiations are taking place with landowners and information will be made available to the public on our public register when the scheme is ready for consultation.

King Charles III National Trail links to Wales Coast Path

The English coastal path (named King Charles III) national trail is opening in September. A link across the seven bridge from Aust, to the Wales Coast Path is being discussed. It is hoped there will be new signage in place on both sides of the bridge and there will be an event to open the route.

Links to Newfoundland!

Chepstow Walkers Welcome Chair, Phil Mundel LAF chair, and Ruth Rourke met the Executive Director, Erika Pardy and Melissa Mills (Trail Design and development specialist) of the Great Coastal Trail Authority, Newfoundland, in May. They had travelled around the coast of Wales learning about how we developed the Wales Coast Path, so they could apply lessons learnt to their own Great Coastal Trail.

The Great Coastal Trail is an ambitious initiative being developed across the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland and Labrador, one of the most remote and economically challenged regions in the province. The project represents a significant step toward building long-term economic resilience, using tourism as a primary driver in regions historically dependent on fishing and forestry.

By connecting coastal communities through a world-class trail system, the initiative aims to create new opportunities for local businesses, support population retention, and position the region as a globally recognized destination for experiential travel.

Chepstow Walkers Welcome were able to talk about a bottom up approach with community development, introduce the concept of Walkers Welcome and talk about the benefits of the route for Chepstow.

Other News

Mapping Litter:- The University of Gloucestershire are developing a project to map litter across the UK. The Wye Valley AONB and MCC Countryside Access think it is a good idea and will be encouraging our volunteers to get involved. Let us know if you are interested.

<https://fast-litter.org/>

Habitat Heros return to Beacon Hill

Cattle are back on Beacon Hill heathland in Monmouthshire this spring, lending a helping hoof to restore and protect this special landscape.

Eight Australian Lowline cattle arrived on site on May 8 and will spend the spring and summer months grazing the heathland as part of our ongoing conservation in partnership with Wye Valley National Landscape.

Now in its fourth year, the conservation grazing project is proving a natural and effective way to manage the heathland habitat.

By nibbling away at fast-growing invasive plants, the cattle help prevent these species from taking over, allowing a wider variety of plants and wildlife to thrive.

Heathlands like Beacon Hill are rich in biodiversity but need active management to survive. Without grazing, scrub can quickly encroach, shading out smaller plants and reducing the diversity that makes these habitats so valuable.

This year's team of Lowline cattle – including Hamish, Onyx, Geoff, Sam, Banana and Tuesday – are perfectly suited to the job.

Originally from Australia, Lowline cattle are hardy, docile and well adapted to conservation grazing. Their smaller size reduces the risk of soil compaction and damage to sensitive soils, while their varied grazing habits help create a more diverse mix of vegetation and ensure the site is not overgrazed. [Natural Resources Wales / Hoof-powered habitat heroes return to Beacon Hill](#)

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 Rhaydr, Usk
NP161GA

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