

Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum (LAF)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday 28 April 2022

Tywi Centre, Llandeilo, 6pm

Present:

Members:

Mark Hadley (MH) – LAF Chair
Richard Leggett (RL)
Mo Rapley (MR)
Dave Gravelle (DG)
Paul Barrett (PB)
Sean Brown (SB)
Phil Snaith (PS)
Dave Gravelle (DG)
Wyn Owen (WO)
Geoff Williams (GW)
Tara-Jane Sutcliffe (TS)
Peter Griffiths (PG)

Secretary - Caroline Ferguson (CF) – CCC Countryside Access Manager

Advisors/ Observers/Speakers/Members of the Public

Phil Morgan (PM) NRW Land Management Team Leader
Miriam Jones-Walters (MW) NRW Land Stewardship Specialist Advisor
Christopher Nelson (CN) Highways Asset Manager (online attendance)

Apologies:

Members:

Karen Burch (KB) – Deputy Chair
Jillie Gardner (JG)
David Stacey (DS)

Advisors/Observers:

Stephen Pilliner – CCC Head of Transportation and Highways
Neil Thomas – CCC Senior Outdoor Recreation Manager
Cllr Hazel Evans – CCC Cabinet Member
Clive Poulton - Chair Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition for Action (CDCfA)

Note:

CCC in these minutes refers to Carmarthenshire County Council
NRW in these minutes refers to Natural Resources Wales
PROW in these minutes refers to Public Rights of Way

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Items 1 - Welcome & Apologies</p> <p>MH welcomed forum to first face to face meeting since March 2020 and introduced new members, all members then introduced themselves.</p> <p>CF read out apologies</p>	
<p>Item 2 – New Members/Resignations</p> <p>New Members – ¹Geoff Williams, ²Wyn Owen & ³Tara-Jane Sutcliffe - introduced as above</p> <p>Resignations - None</p> <p>Item 3 – New Highways Online Reporting System</p> <p><i>CN joined meeting remotely via Teams.</i></p> <p>CF introduced CN to forum members.</p> <p>CN provided a visual demonstration of the new Highways online defect reporting system that has been live since November 2021.</p> <p>System offers online reporting of issues found on Carmarthenshire’s public road network via the CCC website.</p> <p>Demo included the reporting process and a view of the back-office side of the system to see how reported issues are handled.</p> <p>System should enable reporting of issues/defects on all roads from UCR to A roads. Any roads missing from the system should be reported to Highways via the Contact Centre.</p> <p>Any issues that cannot be logged via the online system should be reported to Highways via the Contact Centre.</p> <p>UCRs sit low on the Highways Network Hierarchy, this is a consideration for Highways managers/inspectors when they prioritise their incoming work.</p> <p>Members asked about progress on the equivalent PROW online reporting system CAMSWeb.</p> <p>CF updated members on current position.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CF</p>

System soft launch in February returned useful feedback from the selected users and software developers (Exegesis) are working through each item.

CCC Countryside Access staff have also been using the system and feeding back to Exegesis.

Some changes are required to improve the system but nothing that should prevent full launch soon.

Ideally the Highways system and CAMSWeb can be linked in the future so that users can be directed between the two systems.

Reported issues being displayed to the public via CAMSWeb was then discussed by members.

CF - Not CCC's intention to display PROW issues on public facing CAMSWeb.

RL & SB agreed it would be best not to so people will report all issues, not be put off when it already exists on map. If all users report of the issues they encounter it will provide 'real' data and an accurate picture of demand.

GW queried RA insurance implications if PROWs are shown as closed on CAMSWeb.

CF could not foresee any effect on insurance. Routes subject to a legal temporary closure will be shown as 'closed' and should not be used. Otherwise, the intention is to highlight all routes considered open such as Category A and B promoted routes (possibly Cat Cs in future) without suggesting others are closed.

RL – RA walk leaders should be reccing PROWs prior to using them for a walk.

WO – Will only promoted routes be shown on system?

CF – All of CCC's PROW network will be visible.

RL – when can system launch?

CF – Full launch should be achievable beginning of June unless Exegesis considers there is a need to delay.

CN left the meeting.

Item 4 – NRW Woodland Creation Scheme – Brownhill, Llangadog.

MW joined meeting remotely via Teams

MW presented the Brownhill Woodland Creation Scheme to members.

The scheme is part of a wider project to compensate for lost woodland estate through wildfires, disease etc and help meet Paris Climate Agreement targets.

NRW have purchased 350 hectares of land to plant so far which will provide a small fraction of the overall planting needed.

Brownhill is one of 3 sites alongside sites in Wrexham and Caerphilly and will be a Commemorative Covid Legacy Woodland scheme.

Comments have been received in respect of loss of good agricultural land; portions of the Brownhill site are potentially going to be retained as productive agricultural land alongside newly created woodland.

The published consultation deadline following the first round of public events has passed however the proposal is still open to comments and there will be further consultation events/workshops over the summer to firm up the plans.

AW invited questions.

PS – have NRW considered food production woodland, Towy Valley used to be renowned for apple orchards and cider production.

AW – yes, glad this has been raised, areas of the scheme are being considered for fruit trees.

RL – Is the site best suited to a scheme to reduce carbon, majority of visitors would have to drive there, poor walking/cycling links.

MH – Access and facilities like toilets for visiting public are a significant consideration

CF – For the site to gain ‘buy in’ from the local community they need to have a walking/cycling/riding link from Llangadog village so that they can enjoy the site without having to walk along the A40 or get in the car. There are opportunities to link with the PROW network on the other side of the A40 which could encourage non-motorised visits.

AW - Currently access off the A40 is the only one available but further opportunities are being explored. There will be a car park available and discussion with the nearby campsite regarding providing toilet facilities is proposed.

MH – Would re-planting deforested areas be better than creating new woodland?

AW – Simply re-planting existing area of forestry would not hit compensatory planting targets.

RL – promotion will be key; this area of the County offers numerous public access opportunities, but few people know about them. A recent walk near the Brownhill site between Llangadog and Llandoverly revealed a previously unexplored area but very pleasant section of the PROW network.

AW – there will be marketing of the site, so the public know what the scheme is about.

MH – Could the LAF see the finalised proposals.

AW – A site visit with LAF members could be arranged to view the proposed scheme on the ground.

Item 5 2021-22 Projects Report

CF provided supplementary information to the project report circulated to members prior to the meeting.

MH commented on the positive results once projects are completed.

Queries raised in respect of the potential multiuser trail across the north of the County once proposed project-based route improvements are completed.

CF – an outline plan of the overall trail proposal can be provided for the next meeting.

CF

MH – Are 2022-23 projects planned yet? Could members see a final projects list by July meeting?

CF – We have projects in mind, all are at the early planning stages at present. We may be able to provide full details of some projects by July and perhaps outline plans for others.

SB – Will the Kidwelly Byways project go ahead this year?

CF – we would like to deliver this project in 22-23 as it is a project of Category B Med-High priority routes on the Network Hierarchy (NH). Striving to deliver the project is subject to getting a new Officer in post covering the southern portion of Carms; this officer is needed to take the project forward. The first stage will be reviewing the LAF advice note and considering proposed changes to the TRO report.

RL – New LAF members will need a copy of the NH so that they understand its relevance in the work undertaken by the Countryside Access team.

CF to circulate

CF

Item 6 – Maintenance of BOATs/UCRs subject to TRO

MH - Agenda item proposed by Deputy Chair who has sent her apologies.

Reason for item to discuss TRO'd vehicular routes that are rarely maintained as they are bottom of the Highways Network Hierarchy.

These routes still have recreational value, should still be open to others such as walkers and horse riders. Could they be added to PROW NH under Category B multiuser routes?

PS – there is a lack of signposting of UCRs, people don't know where they are.

MH – Recent NRW advice note regarding standardised signposting for UCRs was not taken forward so there is no National standard for Highways to work to. Will email NRW further on the subject.

MH

SB – TROs may need review where they have been imposed due to excessive use, they may be ok now.

MH – Will produce an advice note and proposed that item is included in July agenda for full discussion when a Highways representative has issued a written response or is in attendance to discuss with group.

MH

Item 7 – Issue Reports

No reports available this quarter.

RL – Noted a recent article in the South Wales Guardian commented on a letter sent by the Carmarthenshire Ramblers groups to candidates in the forthcoming elections calling on them to carry out the Council’s statutory duties to protect and maintain the PROW network in the County. The letter had highlighted the growth in the number of outstanding issues since June 2018, and the growth in the number of issues outstanding more than three months.

CF – aware of the article and has responded to one query from a County Councillor.

RL – Suggested that the LAF might want to send a new advice note to new Councillors about the current concerns about PROW access.

CF – an introduction to elected members following purdah might be more appropriate.

RL also raised subject of PI surveys and the overdue 100% network survey proposed for 2021-22.

CF – team are working hard to get CAMSWeb live so that the 100% network survey can get underway before end of 2022.

Scheduling a PI survey in the interim is resource heavy and will inevitably delay the more valuable 100% survey and associated data.

MH – will email SP regarding delays in delivering the 100% survey or PI surveys.

Item 8 - 1st Review ROWIP Delivery Plan

CF informed members that Authority has chosen to use a consultant to deliver review. 2 delivery proposals received. Successful consultant may attend next LAF depending on appointment timescale.

Item 9 – Actions arising from Minutes of last meeting

Illegal Rave Events – NRW/CCC/Police need to pin down a protocol to ensure public access isn’t adversely affected.

Digital Working Copy of Common Land map – still not received, need to chase up Common Land Officer

CF

Minutes – need to be re-ordered online webpages

CF

Staff – CF updated on current staffing in Countryside Access team.

CF

Planning Applications – Searches assistant needs details of new LAF members.

	CF
Item 10 – AOCB	
CF – Equestrian Strategy to be completed in draft by end of July	
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MH – Should the LAF request an increase in Countryside Access budget, will the forum be heard?	CF
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RL – PROW Furniture Charging Policy – could final version be circulated and be included on July agenda for discussion?	
CF will circulate and include on agenda. The forthcoming Enforcement Policy, to be produced once Equestrian Strategy is completed, will link with the Charging Policy, the two documents should complement each other. The enforcement Policy was planned for 21-22 completion but will now be 22/23.	
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MH – When will archives be re-opening? The altered policy in respect of taking photos could have a negative effect. Could LAF issue an advice note on this?	
CF – Do not know exact re-opening date, April was the last date mentioned. An advice note from LAF re: charging might be taken into account although the relevance to forum’s ‘Public Access’ obligations would have to be clear.	
MH – Can CF obtain charging details for LAF members	CF
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MH – Open Access Land review pushed back from 2024 to 2029.	
No objection from members. LAF to respond?	MH?
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MH - LAF Chairs meeting on May 5 th , MH cannot attend, if deputy cannot, would any other members be interested in attending on behalf of CCC LAF? Let MH know.	ALL
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MH - LAF Annual Report, any comments to MH. CF needs to do an introductory note on behalf of CCC	ALL/CF
Meeting Closed	