

Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum (LAF)

Meeting Minutes

Monday 5th June 2023

Tywi Centre, Carmarthen, 6pm

Present: Members:

Mark Hadley (MH) – LAF Chair
David Stacey (DS)
Richard Leggett (RL)
Mo Rapley (MR)
Phil Snaith (PS)
Dave Gravelle (DG)
Peter Griffiths (PG)
Sean Brown (SB)
Karen Burch (KB)
Tara-Jane Sutcliffe
(TJS)

Secretary – Jason Lawday (JL) (ILS) – CCC Countryside Access Officer

Advisors/ Observers/Speakers/Members of the Public:

Councillor Edward Thomas (ET) - County Councillor & Cabinet Member for
Transport, Waste, and Infrastructure Services
Rob Williams (RW)
Phil Morgan (PM) – NRW Land Management Team Leader

Apologies: Members:

Wyn Owen (WO)
Phil Snaith (PS)

Advisors/Observers:

Note:

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

ITEM	ACTION
<p><u>Item 1 – WELCOME & APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>MH & JL welcomed forum and introduced Philip Morgan. MH read out apology received. MH / JL agreed to change order of Agenda items to accommodate PM and ET. MH requested that Agenda be sent out sooner in future (minimum of 2 weeks).</p>	
<p><u>Item 2 (item moved forward from Item 10) Request to Cllr Thomas.</u></p> <p>MH raised issue of lack of response to recent LAF request to Cllr Thomas. Cllr Thomas said that he would follow this up. JL explained that Head of Service (Stephen Pilliner) had requested internal discussion before responding, and that this had not happened yet. MH stated that LAF does not feel that it is being listened to. CCC has been consistently slow responding to a number of issues now and in the recent past. RL stated that LAF grant-based funding is dependent on having an active and working LAF. There is a need to engage properly with the LAF to show that it is working effectively. KB stated that the LAF exists to help the Local Authority. MH stated that the LAF can be used to gain additional funding. JL read out interim response for queries relating to PRow matters.</p> <p>[TMS - I'd like it noted that Cllr Thomas was only present for the first hour of the meeting: I feel it important, given the concerns expressed by members at poor engagement with the LAF.]</p> <p>Action Point – CCC to provide a provide a response as soon as possible.</p> <p>ROWIP – it was noted that the ROWIP is still not ready to be signed off by CCC for circulation / consultation.</p> <p><u>Item 3 (previously Item 6 on Agenda) – NRW FORESTRY WORKS PROCEDURES</u></p> <p>MH introduced PM, who gave an overview of NRW timber harvesting procedures. KB queried consultation process with CCC PRow team. PM stated that there is no requirement in place at present, and that contractors are responsible for managing public safety, arranging for any necessary closures and for reinstatement works. A pragmatic approach is taken regarding low public use remote locations. MH felt that NRW should follow correct legal procedures. KB would like to see more communication and ideally PRow's should not be used for forestry operations. PM stated that reinstatement should be carried out by the contractor to the satisfaction of NRW and is inspected on completion. There are handover meetings at the end of harvesting projects. KB stated that riders would not like resurfacing with stone. MH discussed recent issues at Fwng forestry site, Cynghordy. Reinstatement have resulted in a general improvement, but there could be issues at the lower end</p>	<p>ET</p>

<p>where it is still wet. Would like to see improved communication going forward, and pre-works condition assessments. SB queried what happens if PRoWs are not officially closed. KB could contractors carry out pro-active PRoW work whilst onsite? DG – what powers do NRW have? Are they used? MH / PM – general lack of contractors for maintenance work, most work is regarding standing crops. DJ – do contracts stipulate standards? DG – what penalty is imposed if contractors don't reinstate public rights of way? PM confirmed that there isn't any as such apart from possibly not getting a contract in the future. PM – NRW should develop a policy for bridleways. Recommends that users check the NRW website before visiting. MH – LAF advises that NRW follow the correct procedures for all works that impact on public rights of way and apply for the necessary closures in all instances. JL – we will arrange a separate meeting to improve communication.</p> <p>Action Point – NRW to liaise with PRoW team to improve communication and procedures going forward.</p>	<p>JL / PM</p>
<p><u>Item 4 – NRW ACCESS REFORM CONSULTATION</u></p> <p>JL opened discussion of recent consultation. LAF felt that there had been little change. MH stated that NRW had been unable to proceed with proposed changes due to Welsh Government reform. NRW will follow non-legislative recommendations. JL stated that CCC had not received any other recent communication on this.</p> <p>Item 5 – (previously item 3 on the Agenda) OFF-RAOD MOBILITY VEHICLES</p> <p>JL gave overview of newly-developed all terrain mobility vehicle currently being trialled by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) at the Mountain Centre, Libanus, Powys. Generally positive views by LAF members. Some discussion around use on byways and green lanes – would they be exempt from Traffic Regulation Orders?</p>	
<p><u>Item 6 – TAN Y LAN CARBON CAPTURE PROJECT CONSULTATION</u></p> <p>JL gave overview of project. General discussion revealed some confusion regarding location and effect that project will have on public access. JL clarified that site was within the Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP), and that the BBNPA LAF were also being consulted. BBNPA do not have delegated responsibility for the road network, so the 'green lane' unclassified road that passes through the project site would still have relevance for the LAF. JL clarified that Highways Planning team had provided a response and that the developer would not use the unclassified road for forestry operations, though they would need to cross the road at the main access point. JL gave some background to the road, stating that it had previously been separate from adjoining fields, but landowners had removed hedges to incorporate it into the fields, resulting in the need for gates. It may be possible to remove some gates as part of the project, as the fields will no longer be grazed. MH – off-road organisations, GLASS and the TRF should also be consulted.</p>	

<p>Requested clearer map, clarification on gate removal and assurance that access is maintained during works. KB queried whether the public footpath could be upgraded to a bridleway to provide a link from the road to Pen Arthur Forest (some additional discussion regarding another previously proposed access point at another location on the road).</p> <p>Action Point – CCC to respond to developer to request clearer / updated map. clarification on gate removal and assurance that access is maintained during works. Request for path upgrade to bridleway status. Request that GLASS and TRF are consulted. Action point – PM to investigate bridleway links from road – liaise with JL.</p>	<p>JL PM</p>
<p><u>Item 7 – FUTURE GENERATIONS WALES ACT</u></p> <p>KB – horse riders have not been included in the Act. KB referenced recent response to the Local Development Plan (LDP), which could be used in response. TJS – Informed LAF that the Future Generations Commissioner is carrying out a consultation.</p> <p>Action Point – obtain and distribute additional information on the consultation.</p>	<p>ILS / TJS</p>
<p><u>Item 8 – EQUESTRIAN STRATEGY UPDATE</u></p> <p>JL reported that there has not been any work on redrafting the Equestrian Strategy since Caroline Ferguson went on maternity leave. KB – stated that she is particularly disappointed. The ROWIP is the only CCC document that references equestrians, and the Equestrian Strategy came about to address issues not covered in the ROWIP. Cllr. Campbell had previously explained that a Strategy was needed to cover different portfolios. Equestrians are considered to be leisure users, but Leisure does not make provision for them. Is there any way to help Authorities access funding? Can themes be drawn out from the Strategy document so that the LAF can have an input? The LAF should be given an opportunity to progress this document, however the Authority thinks this is possible, either giving us themes to comment on, extracts from it, or a draft, so that progress is made. When Caroline comes back there will be other excuses why this can't be progressed and understandably it won't be her top priority so the Action was to identify how the LAF can be used to make some progress whilst she is away, to assist Caroline, and a suggestion was also to use a consultant. Note was also made that the results of the survey have not been reported to the LAF. I requested if we could have some feedback. Bhs officials and I were involved in creating the questions and we were expecting some results for the time we invested in it. MH – can KB have sight of draft document? LAF would like results of summary and progress. RL stated that the main issue was lack of capacity. Could a consultant be used? LAF are fully sympathetic to the long-term issues due to lack of resources but are concerned at the lack of action regarding the Equestrian Strategy as this has been in development for a number of years without a product. ET – will look into this further.</p> <p>Action Point – Investigate options for providing relevant information for the LAF.</p>	<p>ILS / ET</p>

<p><u>Item 9 – ACTIONS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</u></p> <p>(2) A48 CROSSING CLOSURE CONSULTATION</p> <p>JL – further to response read out in Item 2, PRow team to update.</p> <p>Action Point – Investigate and update LAF (Kirsten Stiles (KS)).</p> <p>(3) ISSUE REPORTS</p> <p>RL – Issue reports received and analysed. Planned network survey may render statistics unnecessary in future. For now, we should continue with quarterly reports. Request for next report to be run at the end of June. Altogether, issues have risen significantly, with a possible post covid effect. In the seven years since the LAF started to receive regular issue reports, the total number of unresolved issues across the maintenance and legal teams has risen from 1623 (May 2016) to 2911 (May 2023). The number of issues outstanding more than 5 years has risen considerably since May 2016: The number of Maintenance issues outstanding more than 5 years has risen from 413 to 786. The number of Legal issues outstanding more than 5 years has risen from 88 to 432. The statistics illustrate the growth in demand and issue reporting and demonstrates that PRow teams are an under-resourced service that requires greater commitment from the Authority.</p> <p>This led on to a general discussion regarding the need for better information about local footpaths. RL described an underused route from Nantgaredig to Carmarthen that could be better advertised to local people via information panels that could be installed by the Community Councils. The idea of providing information panels showing the PRowS locally could be discussed with the Community Councils.</p> <p>TJS complimented the new information panels in Llandovery, which have ben installed by the Town Council.</p> <p>MH made the LAF aware that CCC had previously taken underutilised funding from the Town & Community Councils to employ additional rangers. JL gave some background information on the County Walks projects with reference to the information panels installed as part of the projects. JL also gave overview of volunteer projects currently ongoing and referenced upcoming network survey.</p> <p>RL – Could Ramblers Cymru attend the next LAF meeting?</p> <p>KB queried whether the stats are being scrutinised at a higher level.</p> <p>Action Point – Provide next Issue Report.</p> <p>Action Point – Invite Ramblers Cymru to attend the next LAF meeting.</p> <p>Action Point – Follow up with Cllr / Exec Board regarding use of stats by Authority.</p> <p>(5) PROJECT UPDATE</p> <p>JL – gave update from Alan Warner (AW).</p> <p>MH queried that the update did not include the ten projects previously discussed and would like further information. LAF should have had an input.</p> <p>KB – discussion regarding Mynydd Mallaen bridleway improvement. Has AW made use of the contacts that KB supplied? Has funding supplied by Carmarthenshire Riders been used? What will happen with additional funding?</p> <p>Action Point – Obtain an update from Alan Warner (CCC).</p> <p>(6) LAF CHAIRS MEETING</p>	<p>KS</p> <p>ILS ILS MH</p> <p>ILS</p>
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<p>MH – no update. JL update on previous Action Point regarding WCP updates / officer to attend LAF. Explained that no updates available as yet, but will follow up.</p> <p>Action Point – Wales Coast Path Officer to be invited to the next LAF.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>(7) HORSE RIDING PROPOSALS IN CCC PARKS KB – did not get a response to enquiry. Recent site visit at Mynydd Mawr with riders went well, routes suitable for riders but perhaps not all users. Site manager stated that routes will stay as they are. KB - access to beach via byway has been blocked by a bollard. MH outlined recent query regarding beach riding by carriage users.</p>	
<p>(8) PROW MARKETING MEETING MH – provided update and explained that budget was too small to allow for physical leaflets to be produced, so leaflet will remain in digital format. KB – there should be more for riders, but most do not have dedicated websites, as communication is mainly via Facebook. DG – is there a possible case for using QR codes?</p>	
<p>(9) CYCLING ON FOOTPATHS MH – no update. Led to general discussion of the recent Tywi Valley Cycleway consultations.</p>	
<p>(11) COMMON LAND MAP JL – no update.</p> <p>Action Point – Contact CCC Common Land Officer, Andrew Paterson.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>(12) ARCHIVES VISIT JL – no update.</p> <p>Action Point – Contact Archives to establish suitable dates and arrange visit.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>(13) CURRENT LIVE PERMANENT TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS MH – no update. Byway User Group (BUG) mentioned, plus fact that Minutes of last BUG meeting are currently circulating internally.</p> <p>Action Point – follow up with Highways legal team regarding previously requested list of TRO's.</p>	<p>MH</p>
<p><u>ITEM 10 – ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS</u></p> <p>BRECHFA WEST MH – Would like update regarding Brechfa West long-distance trail and Walking Group.</p> <p>Action Point – follow up with NRW.</p> <p>GATE SPONSORSHIP AND PROMOTION</p>	<p>ILS / PM</p>

RL related information recently supplied by Alan Richards regarding WCP gate sponsorship projects in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. Could the PRoW team / WCP Officer consider this for Carmarthenshire.

RL presented recent article promoting Carmarthenshire in the Ramblers UK magazine.

PRoW TEAM STAFFING UPDATE

JL – updated the LAF on the recent approval for job profile changes of the two vacant posts, which will now become an additional ranger and a project officer. There will also be an additional ranger post.

MH – the LAF are very happy with this news.

HEART OF WALES LINE TRAIL & ISSUE REPORTING

KB recently rode part of the HOWL Trail and found some issues. Queried best way of reporting, and how are issues followed up when reported via CAMSWEBB.

JL explained prioritisation protocol.

NETWORK SURVEY

Discussion returned to the upcoming network survey. JL provided overview, stating that Ramblers Cymru were to be employed to facilitate the project, which had advantages in terms of insurance, training, staff commitment, etc. Also, the new Project Officer would have a role.

RL suggested that due to the scale of the task that it may be a good idea to trial a pilot survey first.

HOSPITAL ACCESS

PG – carried out visit, choice of site of proposed new hospital to be made at the end of the year. Park & Ride at Glangwili will be ending. Additional parking has been made available at the new Gwili Railway train station.

ANNUAL REPORT

MH made the point that it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to provide this, but he had done the work to produce recent reports to ensure that they are written.

Action Point – make decision and progress.

MH / ILS

TYWI VALLEY PATH

discussion took place and queries raised about the Compulsory Purchase Order which appears to apply to the full extent of the route. Specifically, LAF members raised the concern that this might lead to friction with path users if landowners are opposed to the route.

Next Meeting Monday 18th September,
Leisure Centre, Carmarthen