

Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum (LAF)

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 5 March 2024

Carmarthen Leisure Centre, Johnstown – 4pm

Present: Members:

Mark Hadley (MH) – LAF Chair
Richard Leggett (RL)
Phil Snaith (PS)
Sean Brown (SB)
Jillie Gardner (JG)
Mo Rapley (MO)
David Gravelle (DG)

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

Advisors/ Observers/Speakers/Members of the Public:

Cllr Edward Thomas (ET) – Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services
Jason Lawday (JL) CCC Countryside Access Officer
Alex Morgan (AM) CCC Countryside Access Project Officer
Phillip Morgan (PM) - (Natural Resources Wales)
Julie Sweet (JS) – Cilmaenllwyd Walking group
Alan Richards (AR) – Pontarddulais Walking Group
Christoff Fischer (ChF) – Llandeilo Town Mayor
Kate Glanville (KG) – Llandeilo Town Council & River Towy Swimmers
Tony Loizou – Carmarthenshire Anglers

Apologies: Members:

Karen Burch (KB)
Wyn Owen (WO)
David Stacey (DS)
Peter Griffiths (PG)

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
WG in these minutes refers to Welsh Government

ITEM	ACTION
<p><u>Item 1 – WELCOME & APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>MH welcomed forum.</p> <p>MH / CF read out apologies received.</p> <p>MH introduced observers/advisors</p>	
<p><u>Item 2 LLANDEILO BATHING WATER DESIGNATION</u></p> <p>KG presented information on pending application to Welsh Government, submitted by River Towy Swimmers, for Bathing Water Designation (BWD) at ‘swing bridge’ Llandeilo.</p> <p>BWD ensures water is clean for the bathing season (May to September).</p> <p>Legal cleanliness criteria to meet to achieve/maintain designation – swing bridge site presently has excessively high E-coli levels.</p> <p>Surfers against sewerage presented to Llandeilo prior to consultation to outline BWD.</p> <p>Consultation period attracted 500 responses from public, one negative.</p> <p>Application doesn’t currently have landowner support or CCC support.</p> <p>Landowner has liability concerns. Designation & associated signage apparently absolves landowner of liability, not clear where liability would lie if site successfully designated.</p> <p>Unclear which CCC department should be determining whether to support. Cllr Thomas offered to assist in making enquiries with Heads of Service to determine this.</p> <p>Dwr Cymru supports application, want to use the case as example of community working and helping clean up river.</p> <p>Following PS query, KG confirmed application site will not be affected by the proposed Llandeilo by-pass</p> <p>PM suggested WG should be providing clarity around landowner liability and appropriate local authority support as part of some improved guidance.</p> <p>MH queried what group are seeking from the LAF?</p> <p>KG support and assistance in gaining support.</p> <p>RL LAF role is to advise, key to know who will lead in CCC to correctly issue LAF advice.</p>	<p>ET</p>

<p><u>Item 3 – HEAD OF SERVICE MEETING</u></p> <p>Meeting took place 19/02/24 – MH & RL attended on behalf of LAF</p> <p>Long agenda, not everything covered in time available but key issues discussed. Very positive discussion overall with several actions agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future LAF advice notes to be channelled through Cabinet Member. Cllr Thomas will distribute to relevant departments/divisions and to ensure responses received promptly. • To become more strategic, annual programme of work/discussion from LAF to be produced – content to be taken from LAF Annual Report. • Query in respect of extent volunteers are used by other Welsh Authorities, agreed that speaking to other Councils worthwhile, MH issued consultation via email, 4 responses so far. • Attempt to deliver further flexibility in meeting days/times, during office hours if possible, to make it easier for officers to attend. • Progress of ROWIP Review and Equestrian Strategy to be discussed with CF & Highways and Transportation Manager to set delivery timeline. <p>RL main takeaway from meeting, clarity of LAF role, advise CCC not lobby.</p> <p>MH - current LAF approaching end of 3-year term, during appointment of next LAF terms of reference to be revised for clarity and issued to new members to clearly outline advisory role.</p>	<p>ET</p> <p>MH</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>CF</p>
<p><u>Item 4 – A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO PROW REGISTRATION PROCESS IN CARMs</u></p> <p>JL gave verbal presentation to group with supporting images.</p> <p>A historic view given of the process of recording PROWs and why many PROWs were recorded at the lowest rights. Also details provided of records held by Countryside Access team that are publicly available at Mynydd Mawr offices and intention to move them to archives once digitised.</p> <p>Questions taken following presentation.</p> <p>Follow up group discussion on under recorded rights & network survey.</p> <p>CF updated forum on network survey project (Ramblers Cymru partnership), 83 volunteers signed up, software development to support project in final stages, training with project officer in planning stages for end March/April.</p> <p>Survey links with JL presentation following Head of Service meeting. Discussion on under recorded rights led to suggestion by HoS to include a higher rights assessment as part of network survey.</p> <p>CF considered assessment of suitability only, volunteers can't consider historical context as part of survey. Amending scope of survey agreed, CF has implemented with project officer.</p> <p>Group thanked JL for his time</p>	

<p><u>Item 5 – EQUESTRIAN STRATEGY AND ROWIP REVIEW UPDATE</u></p> <p>CF has had a discussion with new Head of Service to review what stage the ROWIP Review and Equestrian Strategy have reached.</p> <p><i>ROWIP Review</i></p> <p>Plan in place to re-format ROWIP Review to make document more accessible to the reader.</p> <p>Review data gathered and analysed by consultant accurate and thorough, changes needed only to make information more succinct, making use of appendices to make the main body of the review more concise.</p> <p>Target date to finalise revisions for approval is June 2024. LAF will be consulted before target date to inform final version.</p> <p><i>Equestrian Strategy</i></p> <p>Significant proportion of the strategy is in draft. Remaining sections to be completed and in final draft by September 2024.</p> <p>LAF and other interested parties to be consulted prior to target date to help inform the final version.</p>	
<p><u>Item 6 – PROJECTS UPDATE</u></p> <p>CF read out written projects update for 2023-24, produced by Recreation & Access Manager.</p> <p>3 x Access Improvement Grant (AIG) funded projects completed. 1 x AIG funded project ongoing, completion imminent. 3 x Bridge repairs in partnership with landowner(s) (shared cost) 5 x Footbridges repaired/upgraded 1 x Footbridge to be renewed, installation in March 2024 4 x PROW general Maintenance & Improvement projects 4 x DMMOs to external consultant, case reports returned with actionable recommendations 2 x DMMOs to external consultant, investigations ongoing. Wales Coast Path annual Maintenance and Improvement works complete.</p> <p>Detailed project completion report to be produced for next LAF meeting to provide more information to members on the works completed.</p> <p>JG queried the progress of 10 project suggestions submitted by LAF in 2023. CF to locate list and work with AM to add viable project suggestions to forward work programme.</p>	<p>CF</p> <p>CF/AM</p>

<p><u>Item 7 – ISSUES REPORTS</u></p> <p>Issue reports produced and circulated to members ahead of meeting.</p> <p>No comments from members</p>	
<p><u>Item 8 – ACTIONS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</u></p> <p>Inclusion of BOATs in Network Survey</p> <p>Query surrounding inclusion of Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) in 100% network survey.</p> <p>CF explained BOATs are presently maintained by & subject to regular inspection by Highways. Given the inspection data already held BOATs will not be included in the network survey.</p> <p>A future survey project specifically for BOATs could be carried out if deemed necessary.</p> <p>Cycle Track Conversion Orders</p> <p>Query regarding the general application of Cycle Track Conversion Orders in the County where public footpaths are in regular use for cycling.</p> <p>CF not fully up to date on general application of CT Orders by Transport Team, not aware of significant change in policy to date. Aware that Towy Valley Path Cycle Track Orders progressing, may provide template for future Orders.</p> <p>Charging Policy on website</p> <p>Suggested by forum members that Charging Policy should be on website. Positive item.</p> <p>CF agreed, important to raise awareness of Policy for landowners. Will arrange translation and corporate formatting so Policy can go online.</p> <p>Meeting Flexibility</p> <p>Suggested that if members can offer increased flexibility for meeting dates and times, officer attendance might see further improvement.</p> <p>TROs</p> <p>MH advised he is waiting for further information on current live TROs on BOATs and UCRs requested at the last Byways User Group meeting.</p> <p>Access to the information will allow users to potentially review need, offer other solutions such as one-way driving.</p> <p>Town & Community Council Forum</p> <p>Suggested that the T&CC Forum would be a good place to highlight the existence of the</p>	<p>CF/AM</p>

<p>LAF and the valuable work it does for public access in the County.</p> <p>Group agreed that attending the forum to present in person would be more effective than a written communication via email.</p> <p>Now needs to be post-election. CF to arrange at an appropriate time following election.</p>	CF
<p><u>Item 9 – ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS</u></p> <p>20km NRW Walking Trail</p> <p>PM advised that the work to develop a 20km walking trail in Brechfa West have been completed. There will be a launch event soon to formally open the trail.</p> <p>Tourism Team link with NRW</p> <p>PM advised that NRW have recently been working with the CCC Tourism Team to get the various NRW recreational access sites on Discover Carmarthenshire.</p> <p>Forum agreed this was a positive step, providing an easy way for the public to find all access information in one place.</p> <p>Access to NRW stone quarries</p> <p>PM clarified that the possibility of using stone from onsite NRW quarries for PROW (particularly BOAT) repairs and improvements needs to be assessed case by case.</p> <p>Consent to lawfully use stone on PROWs depends on the mineral extraction rules at each site.</p> <p>Towy Valley Path</p> <p>PS provided latest on TVP. Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) are awaiting sign off, this should happen fairly soon. Contracts for works ready to award once CPOs complete.</p> <p>Allocated spend deadline is March 2025.</p> <p>Cilmaenllwyd PROW Project</p> <p>JS provided an update on the Cimaenllwyd Community PROW project. Currently paused to allow for public path Order consultation window, also some formal enforcement required to allow project to be fully completed.</p> <p>Phase 1 is complete, will only be a soft launch as there are still materials/machinery in the vicinity of paths whilst phase 2 is ongoing.</p> <p>RL recommended viewing the project to members, an enjoyable walk and a good example of what can be achieved by a Community initiative.</p> <p>Kidwelly Town Council</p> <p>SB advised members that Kidwelly TC have erected information boards on ‘mountain’ at Mynyddgarreg, Kidwelly.</p>	

The boards provide maps of where the BOATs cross the mountain to inform BOAT users and protect the ecologically sensitive site from misuse.

Very welcome addition, good idea.

Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) Register

SB queried what DMMO applications are currently ongoing in Carmarthenshire.

CF advised that all formal DMMO applications are published online and can be viewed within the CAMSWeb system.

Informal DMMO cases are not listed but Countryside Access team can advise and files can be viewed at the Mynydd Mawr Offices by appointment.

PPO/DMMO Consultation with LAF

MH requested Path Order consultations be sent to members individually as it is difficult for him to forward on.

CF agreed on the basis that any responses from members be compiled as one LAF response.

LAF Annual Report

MH no longer able to produce report on behalf of CCC.

CF thanked MH for assistance with Annual Report to date and confirmed Countryside Access team would produce report going forward.

CTA Attendance at next LAF

Suggested that Carmarthenshire Tourism Association should attend next LAF given ongoing discussions around links between access and tourism.

CF will issue specific invite.

Farming Consultation response from LAF

LAF Chair of Chairs has issued a National LAF response to consultation. No members have raised specific item for inclusion in response therefore MH suggests no need to send Carms LAF response.

Group agreed, members still able to send individual responses.

Cornwall CC prosecuted for DMMO inaction.

Deputy LAF chair highlighted recent case against Cornwall CC regarding failing to determine DMMO application.

Something to be aware of, statutory provisions in place to make a case against local authorities where applications are not being considered.

New Members of Countryside Access Team

CF

<p>CF advised members of 3 new Countryside Access team members – 2 new Rangers and Countryside Access Project Officer.</p> <p>Project Officer (AM) present, introduced himself, his background and his new role.</p> <p>Suggested that projects under consideration could be brought to LAF for comment/support.</p> <p>AM agreed, also reiterated invitation to LAF members to make project suggestions.</p> <p>Access Reform</p> <p>CF advised that in a recent WG meeting, progress on Access Reform in Wales was outlined. Recent progress has been minimal and conclusion to reform proposals is not imminent.</p> <p>AIG Funding</p> <p>CF advised that at a recent WG meeting a further year of AIG funding was announced for 2025-26</p> <p>Thank you to JL for work as interim LAF secretariat.</p>	
<p><u>Item 10 – Next Meeting</u></p> <p>Thursday June 6th 2024</p>	