

Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum (LAF)

Meeting Minutes

Monday 11th December 2023

Tywi Centre, Llandeilo 6pm

Present: Members:

Mark Hadley (MH) – LAF Chair
Richard Leggett (RL)
Phil Snaith (PS)
Sean Brown (SB)
Karen Burch (KB)
Jillie Gardner (JG)
Wyn Owen (WO)
Mo Rapley (MO)
Peter Griffiths (PG)
David Gravelle (DG)

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

Advisors/ Observers/Speakers/Members of the Public:

Amy Goodwin & Rebecca Brough - Ramblers Cymru (AG) (RB)
Phillip Morgan (NRW) (PM)
Julie Sweet (JS)
Peter Clarke (Llanelli Ramblers) (PC)
Cllr Edward Thomas (ET)

Apologies: Members:

Tara-Jane Sutcliffe (TJS)
David Stacey (DS)

Advisors/Observers:

Sam Palmer (TVP) (SP)
Elgan Evans (TVP) (EE)
Neil Thomas (NT)

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. MH / JL read out apologies received. MH / JL agreed to change order of Agenda items leave item 3 to the end, time permitting.</p>	
<p><u>Item 2 RAMBLERS CYMRU – Introduction to new staff & Carmarthenshire Public Rights of Way Network Survey.</u></p> <p>RB & AG introduced themselves and explained their roles in relation to the ongoing network survey and volunteer recruitment. AG will be out and about after Christmas to meet and recruit, with a view to building a base of 100 volunteers. The primary aim is to enable volunteers to carry out surveys, which involve light clearance work. In the longer term it is hoped that volunteers will continue to assist CCC with monitoring and maintaining the PRoW network with the assistance of the newly appointed CCC Project Officer, plus hopefully continued support from Ramblers Cymru if further funding can be secured.</p> <p>JG – Requested that relevant information is sent to the LAF for publicity and recruitment. Also queried with PM how volunteer work would be carried out on NRW property. Pm replied that they also worked with volunteers in other areas, and that he would make enquiries into this.</p> <p>RL – queried funding and duration, RB – end of September 2024.</p> <p>MH – queried whether BOAT’s would be included, ILS – no, as these fall under the remit of Highways, but I will confirm. MH – how will volunteers be recruited? AG & RB – initially via the local Rambler groups but will also recruit more widely. MH recommended that AG & RB made use of the CCC marketing team via Sarah Owen.</p> <p>KB – queried whether TRO’d UCR routes would be surveyed. ILS - replied to say that UCR’s are not included in the survey, as they sit with Highways. Any public rights of way subject to TRO’s may be excluded, or receive partial surveys, depending on the nature of the TRO [Some TRO’s are short-term for public safety purposes, so these may not be suitable and could be followed up once the safety issue has been resolved].</p> <p>RL – queried the percentage of the network to be surveyed. ILS – replied that it is intended that 50% of categories ‘A’ and ‘B’ (excluding bridleways) in the network hierarchy would be surveyed by the rangers as part of their regular duties, as a lot of information is already held on these routes. The volunteers will survey 75% of the category ‘C’, ‘D’ and ‘E’, routes, plus 75% of Bridleways (category ‘B’).</p> <p>PS – queried the amount of work that would be carried out. ILS – clarified that the initial aim of the project is to carry out the network survey, but it is hoped that the volunteer groups would be retained and would continue to monitor and maintain PRoWs going forward. It is also hoped that additional funding can be found to retain the assistance of Ramblers Cymru.</p> <p>SB – queried how the data would be gathered and recorded. AG / RB / ILS clarified that this would be via various means, primarily via physical maps, plus the use personal mobile mapping devices. Survey information would then be input into CAMSWebb by individual surveyors or nominated persons. SB – queried long loading times, ILS replied to say that these may vary and that volunteers were welcome to come into the office to input data.</p>	<p>PM</p> <p>ILS</p>

<p>JG – thought that the CAMSWebb facility should be marketed more widely. MH – there have been problems previously with groups offering volunteer assistance that have been ignored by CCC. ILS - This was primarily in relation to the 'green lane' unclassified road and byway network that sit under Highways, and are outside the scope of the project, but perhaps these groups would be interested in getting involved?</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>RB – thought that it was commendable of CCC that they have 'put their head above the parapet', as the project will no doubt result in a greater workload. JS – queried what was the point of gathering all the information when CCC already has a lot of information and a huge backlog of work? ILS - clarified that much of the information on the system would be outdated, and that there are still significant gaps. Some issues logged may no longer be issues. There may be structures that CCC does not know about that will need recording and appraising, such as minor footbridges (there are a lot of old bridges in the County that need repair or replacement). The survey would give us the opportunity to accurately assess the state of the network and the level of investment required to make necessary improvements. MH – thanked AG & RB</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>Action Point – CCC to provide updates on project progress at each LAF meeting. ILS to add as an Action Point / Agenda item.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p><u>Item 3 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY REGISTRATION PROCESS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE</u> - JL</p>	
<p>Due to a full agenda, this was moved to the end of the meeting, but we subsequently ran out of time. It was agreed that this would be delivered at the next meeting.</p>	<p>JL</p>
<p><u>Item 4 – CYCLE TRACK CONVERSION ORDERS</u> - ILS</p>	
<p>ILS read out project update received from Gemma Thomas, Principal Transport Planner of WSP, who have been commissioned to progress the conversion Orders. The consultation is not yet ready to be carried out, as not all landowners have been identified and contacted. Once this has been done, the consultation will take place, with the LAF included as consultees. PS – queried need for landowner contacts, as he believes that all land is owned by CCC. MH – were the conversions being done under one Order or multiple Orders? How is this being prioritised? KB – How many routes and what is the total length? JG – requested a map of the routes.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>Action Point – ILS to follow up and clarify the above queries.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p><u>Item 5 – LANDOWNER'S GUIDE TO PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND CHARGING POLICY</u></p>	
<p>ILS - gave background: CCC has produced a landowner's guide, which is available on the CCC website and in hard format from our offices and HWBS. The guide was presented at the Town & Community Council Forum in October. RL – the guide makes reference to the CCC charging policy, which is not available online. MH – LAF recommends that the Charging Policy and Network Hierarchy be included on the website.</p>	<p>ILS</p>

<p>Action Point – look into including Charging Policy and Network Hierarchy be made available on the website.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p><u>Item 6 – SCO/01896 GREEN GEN TOWY-USK PROJECT</u></p>	
<p>ILS – gave background information which led to a general discussion of the consultation and project. It was generally agreed that until there was more detail on the actual locations and nature of infrastructure and works that the LAF would be unable to provide a formal response to the consultation. ILS confirmed that a formal response has been submitted by CCC Countryside Access and would continue to keep the LAF updated.</p>	
<p>RL – has contacted the developer and requested that the LAF be included as consultees.</p>	
<p>There was a brief discussion highlighting the complexity of the issues balancing future sustainable energy needs against preserving the natural environment. This will be revisited when the next consultation takes place.”</p>	
<p><u>Item 7 – NAF UPDATE</u></p>	
<p>ILS – gave update of main query points covered in the last two NAF meetings. These were in regard to proposed changes to the LAF regulations around length of membership. There are similar issues across Wales, in that many LAF’s retain members for longer than the normal term due to recruitment issues. Some authorities have been unable to recruit sufficient members to form a LAF, and it is feared that requiring members to stand down could lead to a loss of valuable expertise and potentially the viability of the LAF. ILS will continue to keep the LAF updated.</p>	
<p><u>Item 8 – PROJECTS UPDATE</u></p>	
<p>ILS – read out update from Alan Warner, Recreation & Access Manager (AW). The LAF have requested that the update is included in the Minutes so that it is preserved for future reference:</p>	
<p><i>Maintenance update from 01/04/2023 to 11/12/2023</i></p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p><i>Number of issues resolved – 571, broken down below-</i></p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p><i>Miscellaneous (recorded on CAMS) – 13</i> <i>Boardwalk repairs – 8</i> <i>Bridge improvements – 42</i> <i>Cross Path Fence – 5</i> <i>Gate repair/replace – 18</i> <i>Terrain issues – 33</i> <i>Vegetation issues – 203</i></p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p><i>AIG Grant –</i></p>	
<p><i>3 of 4 bridges have been installed, last will be done before Christmas</i> <i>Mynydd Mallaen project is imminent. (Delayed by weather)</i> <i>Signage project 100% complete.</i> <i>Ffoslas phase 3 – New year project.</i></p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p><i>WCP as usual, maintenance has been carried out and only 5 small improvement projects are being done this year.</i></p>	
<p>KB – queried fencing at Ffos Las</p>	<p>ILS</p>

<p>Action Point - ILS to get update.</p> <p>MH – CCC should make more publicity use of the work done. This was supported by the LAF members and ET. This could be investigated by the LAF publicity and marketing subgroup.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>Action Point – explore options for greater publicity.</p>	
<p>KB – could the Projects Update be made easier to read and contain more detail?</p>	<p>ILS / MH</p>
<p>Action Point – explore possible ways to enhance Project Update reports.</p>	
<p>MH – the LAF has been poorly attended by the maintenance [Recreation & Access] team could this be improved so that the project updates and other relevant matters could be discussed in more detail? This led to a wider discussion regarding officer attendance, with a request for the new Head of Service and other officers to attend future LAF meetings. In other authorities, LAF are held during normal working hours at authority offices, where it is potentially easier for officers to attend. This could be explored as an option, perhaps for one-off meetings, as there is still a need for evening meetings due to member's own commitments.</p>	<p>AW</p>
<p>Action Point – discuss future attendance with AW and explore options for senior officers to attend / meet with the LAF.</p>	
<p>JG – asked what was happening about the '10 Projects' previously proposed? (This is in reference to a list of proposed future projects that the LAF was to be consulted on).</p>	<p>ILS / AW</p>
<p>Action Point – update LAF regarding '10 Projects'.</p>	
<p><u>ITEM 9 – ISSUE REPORTS</u></p>	<p>ILS / AW</p>
<p>RL – not much change overall. Has proposed additional refinement of the stats going forward and requested that additional stats be supplied up to the end of December so that there is a whole calendar year of stats.</p>	
<p>Action Point – contact Idox for additional stats.</p>	
<p>RL – requested that 'UCR's (Unclassified County Roads) be added to the stats. ILS - explained that only public rights of way are recorded on our CAMS system, and that UCR's sit with Highways & Transportation, who have a different mapping system. UCR's also include all of the sealed-surface minor road network, not just the unsealed 'green lane' network, so a lot of work would be required to add this information to CAMS.</p> <p>RL - explained that 'green lane' is not an official category, just a physical description [please note that 'Green Lane' is used as a category by CCC Highways & Transportation in their Network Hierarchy, and also the lesser category of 'Disused Track'].</p> <p>ILS – explained that although operational responsibility for UCR's and Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT's) sits with the Highways & Transportation team, the Recreation & Access team receive annual funding to carry out improvement works to these routes. In such cases, routes are added to CAMS on the 'proposed' layer on an individual route basis so that information can be recorded on CAMS. This is only in relation to one-off improvement projects and is not used for general reporting and maintenance issues, which should be referred to Highways & Transportation. Highways & Transportation have a different mapping system that may not be easily</p>	<p>ILS</p>

<p>compatible with CAMS.</p> <p>ActionPoint – explore options for inclusion of UCR’s on CAMS.</p> <p>MH – the Byway Users Liaison Group are compiling a list of BOAT’s and UCR’s. SB – is compiling a list of routes subject to Traffic Regulation Orders. JG – there is a mismatch of access routes and destinations, for example routes leading to Common Land.</p> <p><u>ITEM 10 – ITEMS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES</u></p> <p>Re: Item 4 - NRW use of private security firm PM – provided an update regarding the incident with a private security firm preventing lawful access to NRW land. As there are a lot of issues with illegal activities and common law trespass on NRW land, NRW have been forced to employ private security forms for out-of-hours cover at problem hotspots. NRW have powers under the Forestry Act to undertake legal enforcement work.</p> <p>Re: Item 8 – Actions Arising (1) MH – queried observer / advisor list. ILS clarified that it had been updated, but that there were still some unanswered contact queries. Action Point – continue to investigate observer / advisor contact list. Add all T&CC clerks to the contact list.</p> <p>Re: Item 8 – Actions Arising (2) ET queried ROWIP update. ILS stated that consultant work had been completed, but the Countryside Access officers are still going though the recommendations and the ROWIP review is not yet ready for consultation. KB – feels that ROWIP and Equestrian Strategy should be progressed together before Caroline Ferguson’s (CF) return [9th of January). Repeated request for information and especially the Equestrian Strategy survey be made available so that the LAF can assist quicker. JG – pointed out that the Equestrian element was moved out of the ROWIP so that it could have a more detailed strategy going forward, but this has stalled and we could be left with a ROWIP without an equestrian element. Action Point – obtain ROWIP Review and Equestrian Strategy update.</p> <p>Re: Item 8 – Actions Arising (3) Annual Report – MH feels that he can no longer carry this out, and it is for the authority to make the report. ILS – offered to make the Annual Report once CF has returned.</p> <p>Re: Item 8 – Actions Arising (4) Wales Coast Path RL – informed LAF that travel writer Paddy Dillon (PD) has been commissioned to investigate short circular routes linking with the WCP. PD has been surveying various routes in Carmarthenshire. JL – has been working with PD on routes that were originally created for the WCP during the initial construction phase but where not subsequently used. In two cases, these still physically exist on the ground, and have no legal status beyond permissive access. It is hoped that these can be revived and made public rights of way.</p> <p>Re: Item 8 – Actions Arising (5) LAF Publicity & Marketing Subgroup – RL – updated LAF with general progress on routes and information added to the CCC Discover Carmarthenshire web pages, with work still ongoing.</p> <p><u>ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER COMPETANT BUSINESS</u></p>	<p>ILS / AW</p> <p>ILS</p> <p>ILS</p> <p>ILS / JL</p>
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<p>(1) Cilymaenllwyd Path Restoration Project – JS gave introduction to ongoing project, which commenced in September. The LAF felt that it was a commendable project that was being delivered at a local level and would serve as a valuable case study.</p> <p>Action Point – keep LAF updated on project progress.</p> <p>(2) Green Lane Environmental Action Movement (GLEAM) MH – gave overview, ILS displayed relevant consultation document. LAF agreed that a formal response was unnecessary at this stage, as the proposals would require further refinement and legislative change. It was agreed that the LAF would keep a watching brief.</p> <p>(3) Towy Valley Path – PS gave brief update. Public enquiry was recently carried out regarding the compulsory purchase orders necessary to allow the project to go ahead. Due to the short notice, the LAF was unable to attend formally. The inspector has five weeks to make their report, which will then need to be signed off by the Welsh Government minister. CCC is preparing ten contracts for the delivery of different sections of the Path. This could serve as a model for future projects, such as the proposed Cardi Bach multi-user route.</p> <p>(4) APCOA Parking sites in Carmarthen PG – explained that there was a new bike parking facility in Cathrines Wharf, Carmarthen, which includes electric charging points, but that there was very poor signage. MH queried whether the nearby HWB knew of the parking facility.</p> <p>(5) Public Rights of Way Network Survey – PC – explained that he would be meeting AG on Wednesday the 13th of December, and that he would be discussing various matters with her, such as should volunteers have official ID whilst carrying out surveys?</p> <p>Next Meeting Tuesday the 5th of March 2024 – Carmarthen Leisure Centre (earlier time?)</p> <p>Following Meeting Tuesday the 6th of June 2024 - Tywi Centre Centre, Llandeilo</p>	<p>ILS</p>
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