

Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum (LAF)

Meeting Minutes

Monday 18th September 2023

Carmarthen Leisure Centre. 6pm

Present: Members:

Mark Hadley (MH) – LAF Chair
David Stacey (DS)
Richard Leggett (RL)
Phil Snaith (PS)
Sean Brown (SB)
Karen Burch (KB)
Jillie Gardner (JG)
Wyn Owen (WO)

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

Advisors/ Observers/Speakers/Members of the Public:

Hannah Wilcox Brooke (HWB) & Angela Charlton (AC) – Ramblers Cymru
Nigel Nicholas (NN) – NRW (Wales Coast Path)

Apologies: Members:

Dave Gravelle (DG)
Tara-Jane Sutcliffe (TJS)
Peter Griffiths (PG)
Mo Rapley (MO)

Advisors/Observers:

Cllr Edward Thomas (ET)
Neil Thomas (NT)
Phil Morgan (PM)
Cllr Hazel Evans (HE)
Lisa Lloyd (LL)

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 HWB, AC and NN. MH / JL read out apologies received. MH / JL agreed to change order of Agenda items to accommodate AC.</p>	
<p><u>Item 2 RAMBLERS CYMRU – Paths to Wellbeing and Carmarthenshire Public Rights of Way Network Survey (item moved forward from Item 3).</u></p> <p>HWB attended remotely and gave presentation on recently completed Paths to Wellbeing project, focusing on the Carmarthenshire project site in Llanybydder. She outlined the benefits of local volunteer working and went on to outline the recently commenced Public Rights of Way Network Survey. This led to Q&A's with HWB, AC and LAF members. JL contributed with clarification on certain points, such as the fact that priority routes (category A and B in the Network Hierarchy) would not be included in the survey, as these are already regularly surveyed and maintained. The priority for the survey was to gain information on the lower categories of PRoWs, where information is lacking. HWB clarified that they intended to use an area-based approach with different groups of volunteers. JL clarified that due to the size of the network, the survey would not be completed before the end of the project, but that it was hoped that volunteers would continue to survey going forward. HWB stated that surveying was a great opportunity to engage with volunteers who may not be able or interested in carrying out physical works. They will be using a flexible, inclusive approach aimed at people with different abilities and will also ascertain what communities need.</p> <p>JG – how will needs of equestrians be catered for in the surveys? Will routes that could be used by equestrians, but currently recorded as footpaths be identified and investigated? JL replied that normal DMMO / landowner dedication process would apply.</p> <p>JG concerned that surveys aimed at local needs only, and that surveys should be standardised to include the needs of tourists, visitors, and associated businesses. HWB & AC outlined approach the limits to the current Ramblers Cymru approach, which is community led / bottom out, rather than top down.</p> <p>JL & AC outlined survey form plans, which is to combine and update existing CCC and Ramblers Cymru forms, plus additional separate bridge forms.</p> <p>RL suggested engagement with Councillors.</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><u>Item 3 WALES COAST PATH (previously Item 2 on Agenda)</u></p> <p>NN presented snapshot of the history of the WCP and some of the difficulties in getting it established. NN explained his personal journey into the role and some of the challenges he has overcome. The Carmarthenshire section is unusual due to the large estuaries, which provide a different walking experience. NN explained funding situation (WCP funded by Welsh Government), and that there are national</p>	<p>ILS</p>

and regional partnership working groups (Carmarthenshire is within the Regional Management Group West). Annual surveys are carried out, with information being input in the WCP Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) via tablets. The WCP officers work to the quality standards for national trails and the Wales Coast Path. Access improvements include the removal of stiles – there is one left in Carmarthenshire. Regional Development Plans are being developed and should be available to the LAF in the future.

P.S. Road safety – in particular the section from Johnstown to Green Castle Woods, which is very dangerous and unsuitable for a national trail. NN agreed and stated that he is currently looking to change the route, with a long-term vision to create a multi-user route. Options include the installation of a roadside pedestrian footway (estimated cost £1m), or route on other side of hedges / field boundaries. MH offered to provide an advice note from the LAF. RL suggested that it could be based on the Regional Development Plan. MH will advise Carys Drew that the LAF will produce an advice note.

KB – originally the WCP was intended for different classes of users, including equestrians – when will this happen? NN replied that they are looking for higher access opportunities – there is funding but getting agreement is difficult. KB requested further information regarding sections that currently accommodate equestrians. JG queried whether sections available for higher classes of users is being promoted, NN confirmed that it is not.

PS & NN discussed site specific issues at Bynea, where it is proposed that a public footpath will be diverted onto a newly constructed multi-user route.

Item 4 – NRW USE OF PRIVATE SECURITY FIRM

MH explained background of issue – NRW using a private security firm on weekends. There was an incident where legitimate users were prevented from using a public highway (this was dealt with by NRW and shouldn't be repeated). Although NRW work with the police on some matters, other issues, such as wild camping are civil matters and can only be dealt with privately. MH queried whether anyone else was aware of any other issues.

KB said that it would be good to know where this was happening, why and how much it was costing.

JG stated that low staffing levels has resulted in NRW subcontracting some roles.

Item 5 - NRW OUTDOOR RECREATION STRATEGY

MH gave a general introduction to the documents which had previously been circulated to the LAF. Consultation not for the general public, key stakeholders only, and is not available on the NRW website. As it covers a wide selection of topics, it may not be possible to provide a single response from the LAF, so MH suggested that individual LAF members provide their own responses, focusing on the needs of the groups that they represent within the LAF.

PS felt that the consultation should be widely available.

KB queried whether user groups that hold events on NRW have been consulted.

MH will enquire who the stakeholders are.

MH

Item 6 – PROJECTS UPDATE

JL read out update email from Alan Warner (AW).

MH queried what the previously stated '10 projects' were.

<p>Action Point – ILS to find out about the 10 projects. Action point – MH also to query at the next Byways User Group meeting.</p>	<p>ILS MH</p>
<p><u>Item 7 – ISSUE REPORTS</u></p>	
<p>RL appreciated positive feedback after the last meeting. Outlined current / historic deficiency and problems such as historic under surveying and under recording, plus lack of resources to tackle backlog of issues. The issue reports have been mapped over seven years and it was suggested that they should be presented to the new Head of Service. The stats show issues recorded within and without the financial year and can be interrogated via CAMS to produce different information, as required. RL offered to work with CAMS provider to further refine stats / produce different stats.</p>	
<p>KB queried whether the issue reports are in the public domain.</p>	
<p>Action Point – clarify public domain status. Action Point – work with Countryside Access team to investigate further options for cooperative working.</p>	<p>JL RL</p>
<p><u>Item 8 – ACTIONS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</u></p>	
<p>MH requested that Minutes are also distributed in pdf format, due to IT issues for some members. Comments that Minutes should continue to be distributed in WORD format, as it is easier to make amendments.</p>	
<p>Action Point – provide Minutes in both formats going forward.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>re: Request to Cllr Thomas MH stated that LAF is very disappointed with the lack of response. RL suggested contacting the Chief Executive and the Council Leader, MH suggested waiting until after the LAF have met with the new Head of Service.</p>	
<p>Action Point – obtain update regarding this matter.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>re: ROWIP - MH requested an update on the ROWIP for the next meeting.</p>	
<p>re: NRW Forestry Procedures JL has improved working relationship with NRW, plus private forestry companies.</p>	
<p>re: NRW Access Reform Consultation No new information, to be discussed in upcoming National LAF (ILS to attend)</p>	
<p>Action Point – Obtain update.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>re: Equestrian Strategy – JL no further update. KB offered to provide an advice paper that could be referenced for the pending redraft of the equestrian Strategy. KB requested summary of the results of the survey that was carried out as part of the initial drafting of the Equestrian Strategy.</p>	
<p>Action Point – Obtain update and summary of survey.</p>	<p>ILS</p>
<p>re: A48 Crossing Closure Consultation – JL no further update.</p>	
<p>Action Point – obtain update.</p>	<p>ILS</p>

re: **Archives Visit** – KB outlined options for visit. MH suggested agreeing a date and sending out invites.

Action Point – Get a date and arrange visit.

KB

PRoW / Access Marketing – MH gave general update and stated that there had been significant positive social media stats. KB commented that QR codes are very useful. MH commented that the lack of a key on the paper maps was very disappointing and rendered the maps less useful. KB suggested that someone from the Tourism & Marketing team could be invited to attend a future LAF.

Horse Riding Proposals in CCC Parks

KB disappointed with current situation at Mynydd Mawr, where there is meadow riding only. There have only been two incidents, but these have led to restrictions. Apart from the two incidents, riding has been generally self-policed well. Issues have been raised on social media.

Cycling on Footpaths

PS has contacted Sustrans, who have not yet had sight of proposed changes to PRoWs / Cycle Path Conversion Orders.

ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

BYWAY USER GROUP MH – next meeting will be this coming Tuesday the 26th at 2pm at Parc Myrddin. MH now has the Terms of Reference.

National LAF – will be on the 4th of October at the Royal Welsh Showground. JL / ILS to attend.

Gilfach Wen / Shands Road Open Cast Colliery application PS – this has been refused. PS Outlined site and history, options for habitat improvement on east and west of site, plus public access along former colliery road.

ITEM 10 – NEXT MEETING DATE

Next Meeting Monday 11th December,
Tywi Centre Centre, Llandeilo