

Carmarthenshire Local Access Forum (LAF)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday 14 July 2022

Tywi Centre, Llandeilo, 6pm

Present:

Members:

Mark Hadley (MH) – LAF Chair
Karen Burch (KB) – Deputy Chair
David Stacey (DS)
Richard Leggett (RL)
Paul Barrett (PB)
Sean Brown (SB)
Phil Snaith (PS)
Tara-Jane Sutcliffe (TS)
Peter Griffiths (PG)
Jillie Gardner (JG)

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

Advisors/ Observers/Speakers/Members of the Public

Councillor Edward Thomas (ET) – County Councillor & Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services
Huw Parsons (HP) – CCC Assistant Media and Marketing Manager **joined remotely**
Thomas Henderson-Jones (TJ) – WSP Consultant **joined remotely**

Apologies:

Members:

Dave Gravelle (DG)
Mo Rapley (MR)
Wyn Owen (WO)

Advisors/Observers:

Stephen Pilliner – CCC Head of Transportation and Highways
Neil Thomas – CCC Senior Outdoor Recreation Manager
Phil Morgan (PM) NRW Land Management Team Leader
Miriam Jones-Walters (MW) NRW Land Stewardship Specialist Advisor

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 and introduced Councillor Edward Thomas as new Cabinet Member in attendance.</p> <p>MH & CF outlined role of LAF and its purpose.</p> <p>MH expressed the gratitude of the forum that ET could attend.</p> <p>All members introduced themselves & their background for the benefit of ET.</p> <p>CF read out apologies</p>	
<p>Item 2 – Introduction to WSP Consultant – ROWIP Delivery Plan Review</p> <p><i>Thomas Henderson-Jones joined the meeting remotely via MS Teams</i></p> <p>CF introduced TJ to forum members.</p> <p>TJ provided a brief outline of his background and experience before outlining the 4 phase, 13 week WSP programme to deliver the ROWIP Delivery Plan review on behalf of CCC.</p> <p>Commencement of review by WSP behind for various reasons but once the approved programme is signed off it will formally commence.</p> <p>KB – Can LAF members have a copy of the programme?</p> <p>CF to circulate review programme once approved and signed off.</p> <p>KB – will there be a public consultation</p> <p>TJ – two LAF workshops and regular communication with CCC but no public engagement.</p> <p>JG – what is the proposed start date?</p> <p>TJ – once contract is signed, imminent.</p> <p>PS/JG – Will this review look at all aspects of ROWIP?</p> <p>CF – No, this is a review of the delivery plan only, as required by statute. CCC elected to undertake this review every 2 years, this may be revised. It is not a review of the whole ROWIP, that is every 10 years.</p> <p><i>TJ left the meeting</i></p>	<p>CF</p>

(added) Item 2a – Promotion/Marketing of Promoted Routes in Carmarthenshire

Huw Parsons joined meeting remotely via Teams.

CF welcomed Huw to the meeting.

RL - read out an email he had sent in on 7th June outlining his observations and concerns around the online promotion and marketing of CCCs County Walks and promoted routes.

HP – Introduced himself and his role in the Media and Marketing team – assisting the tourism function as part of the County’s economic recovery.

The working partnership with Countryside Access via Martin Murray (former CCC Public Rights of Way Development Officer) was then outlined, working to promote selected walks and trails on the Discover Carmarthenshire website with celebrities invited to promote certain walks. There has also been a social media promotion ‘Walk of the Week’.

RL – Website promotion is not as good as leaflet previously used.

HP – leaflets as downloadable PDFs no longer permitted on CCC website due to lack of accessibility to the partially sighted. National regulation, Local Authority could be prosecuted for using PDFs, format had to change. Current methods identified promote to a target audience.

MH – As a tourism operator, not heard about the social media promotion mentioned, also unaware of PDF ruling.

HP – Tourism operators need to sign up to Tourism newsletter

RL – the LAF are concerned with the promotion of Access, if it’s not CCC’s job to promote public access opportunities, who’s is it? Current promotion is a backwards step from former leaflets. Digital enhancement is fine but it has stalled, no recent progress.

PS – Opportunity for 40 miles of National Cycle Network (NCN) to be promoted as all ability access.

Action proposed - LAF representatives to meet with Cllrs Edward Thomas and Gareth John to discuss establishment of workshop to discuss promoted route publicity

MH – LAF advice note required re: Marketing promoted routes and access opportunities. Note to advise meeting with relevant services, possibly include NRW, to discuss issue and identify best possible marketing options that can be delivered.

HP – Happy to be involved.

HP left the meeting.

MH

Item 3 – CAMSWeb

CF - Projected launch date on June 1st was missed. Back-office glitches have slowed the process, working through this with software providers. If no further issues arise then system can go live by the Autumn.

RL – How will BBNP paths be handled, significant delay in being informed a reported issue was inside the National Park.

CF An auto-response has been added to deal with this providing contact info for the BBNP PROW team. Other features have also been added to make the system as accessible and informative as possible ¹PROW Network Hierarchy information ²Temporary Closures ³Routes improved through projects. We look forward to launching soon.

Item 4 – Issue Reports

RL – explained the background to the issue report data and the history of outstanding issues on the PROW network to ET. Key findings for the quarter then outlined to the group.

MH – ET should be added to members list for LAF to ensure he receives issue reports.

CF – explained how projects can generate more issues (self-generated) due to project preparation requiring full and detailed surveys of all PROWs within the project area. Ultimately project completion will resolve both reported and self-generated issues, an overall benefit to the network.

Also, the drop in Maintenance issues alongside the increase in Legal issues has arisen since the re-allocation of certain issue types to the Legal team that were previously assigned to Maintenance.

KB – Can grants be used to assist with maintenance?

CF – No, grant money cannot be used to undertake statutory duties.

SB – Could there be a performance report? Report on number of issues resolved would look more positive.

CF – will investigate running this type of report from CAMS.

PS – With the increase in Legal issues better landowner representation on the LAF could be beneficial.

MH – Can we do a marketing push for landowners? Also, disability representation?

CF – Disability representation will be more achievable if the technology for ‘proper’ hybrid meetings is available. Worth speaking with Farming organisation (FUW/NFU) for landowner representation.

CF

CF

Item 5 - 2022-23 Countryside Access Projects Proposals

CF handed out project proposal information outlining projects proposed for 2022-23 funded by both grant and revenue money. Use of Access Improvement Grant (AIG) funding for PROW bridges has been a welcome boost to the bridges budget over the next 3 years.

MH – congratulated CCC for securing AIG grant.

SB/MH – may be GLASS or TRF funding available to assist with Kidwelly Byways project. Also SB has good user knowledge of the Byways under consideration.

CF – New area Officer Kirsten will liaise with user groups once selected routes have been re-surveyed.

MH – suggested LAF advice note supporting use of external funding for bridge improvements and highlighting problem of funding in this area of PROW management, needs more spending on it.

All agreed it is a big issue, should be included in advice note.

CF - ADEPT have completed survey of local authorities on PROW bridge management issues, CF to circulate survey if permissible.

PS – Can funding for PROWs be sought elsewhere? Resilient Communities fund, Levelling-up fund?

CF – would need to check eligibility, perhaps invite a speaker to LAF if PROWs or other aspects of public access are eligible.

Item 6 – Multi-user Trail, North Carmarthenshire

CF provided map of the multi-user trail that CCC are working towards. Almost all sections have been subject to some improvements through annual projects and/or partnership working. Still a work in progress but something to promote once fully developed.

MH – Passed on thanks for last years project enhancements in Cynghordy area – linked to multi-user trail objective.

KB – Sunnybank Byway should be included in Trail, a valuable connecting route.

CF – scheme is a work in progress, additional routes can be considered if improvements are deliverable.

MH

CF

CF

Item 7 – Brownhill Woodland Creation Scheme update.

No NRW representative present

MH – outlined site layout changes, public access to be restricted to 40 acres of total site area. Is this sufficient to attract horse riders or will equestrian infrastructure be a waste of resources?

KB – a memorial woodland should maximise public access. In the absence of other equestrian access opportunities, access across 40 acres of riding likely to be welcome.

PS – site access is from a very busy Trunk Road

MH – access will be from the lay-by, not direct from the carriageway of the Trunk Road. LAF have been invited to a site visit at some point.

Item 8 – PROW Furniture Charging Policy

RL – has shown Policy to neighbouring Ramblers groups in neighbouring Authority areas. Very positive feedback, email sent to PROW team with queries/recommendations to make Policy clearer. Ramblers trying to be helpful and improve the document.

CF – Consideration given to each point prior to meeting. A sign off date, a scheduled review of the Policy (5 years suggested), an effective date for the Price list and clarification of itemised costs for landowners (e.g. labour costs and materials) will be written into the Policy at the earliest opportunity.

CF

Item 9 – Actions Arising from Minutes of Last Meeting

Maintenance of Byways/UCRs

MH - Response to Advice Note - review of TTROs not possible, low priority, implementing 20mph rules will use all available resources.

SB – unhappy with response, routes are important for recreation

CF – Countryside Access are allocated £16k from Highways to maintain/improve Byways and UCRs considered important for recreation. Info from LAF members useful for this.

MH – Ultimately routes sit with Highways, subject to Highways Network Hierarchy. Needs to be taken further, try to get a commitment to review TTROs after 20mph scheme is complete.

PS – implementing speed limit change will take a lot of time and resources.

Performance Indicators (PIs)

RL – after assurance of PI surveys every 2 years, 2019-20 was missed and still no PI undertaken. Not good enough.

CF – With a 100% network survey planned since mid-2020, conducting a PI survey sampling 5% of the network in the meantime is considered a poor use of resources.

RL – how long will 100% survey take?

CF – unable to answer at this stage, depends on several factors such as number of volunteers, time of year, weather, condition of network. Once surveys are underway and results start coming back in, we should get an idea on how long the whole network will take.

MH – how many volunteers do CCC have

CF – Alan Warner (AW), Recreation and Access Manager, compiled a list of 30+ volunteers in 2021 but given the time that has passed that will need updating when we are ready to set up volunteer training and allocate survey areas.

RL – Were the LAF invited to volunteer? Who are the volunteers?

MH – to ask AW provide more details/project brief on volunteer recruitment for next meeting? Perhaps invite him to talk about the survey at the next meeting of the LAF.

MH/AW

Common Land Map

KB – Has digital Common Land map been sent yet.

CF – No, the request has been re-sent. As the digital record is only a working copy there is no obligation to provide it, perhaps it is not considered appropriate.

MH - need clarification as was suggested it could be provided to LAF members.

CF

Item 10 – AOCB

MH – Going to attend Ramblers event at the Metropole, Llandrindod Wells, one further LAF delegate welcome to attend. 19th July 2022. A discussion and celebration of the Welsh PROW network.

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PS – Ongoing issue of permissive cycling on footpaths needs resolving. Currently no further use of footpaths for NCN network is being permitted. An odd stance from the local Authority, disputed by Sustrans. Permissive cycling on footpaths can be awarded in England. Carmarthenshire has developed lots of cycle paths along footpaths.

CF – understand that legal position needed to be clarified as liability for accident or incident between permissive and PROW users is unclear. Cycle Track Conversion (CTC) Orders suggested as a solution. Opposed by LAF members as routes subject to CTC Orders are removed from Definitive Map and Statement.

MH – What can LAF do? Can we ask ET/Transport Strategy team (Samara) to advise?

RL – Ask Samara how issue can be resolved?

CF – Neither Samara nor Cllr Thomas are legal professionals; this requires guidance from Legal Services.

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RL – Can group re-visit PROW Network Hierarchy, add more details to categories?

CF – Future agenda item

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MH – Strava is creating a safety issue on the road network. Speed challenges on certain steep road sections, particularly single-track roads are an accident waiting to happen.

PS – a problem Nationally, Strava is not regulated, local Authorities do not have any control over the issue.

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JG – A CCC grant has been awarded to Brechfa and Llanllwni Cluster Group. Part of the money will be spent on a new walking leaflet for the Forest Garden site in Brechfa.

Meeting Closed

Next Meeting – October 13th 2022, venue tbc