

# Conwy East and Denbighshire Local Access Forum

Wednesday 22nd March 2023

Coed Pella,  
Conway Road  
Colwyn Bay  
LL29 7AZ

## AGENDA

1.	Welcome, Introductions	SB/ All
2.	Next steps for CEDLAF	SBR
3.	Conwy and Denbighshire updates on Access Improvement Grants (CCBC / DCC)	SBR
4.	Conwy and Denbighshire Access updates (CCBC / DCC)	SBR/ AW/ HA
5.	Expressions of interest for chair and deputy chair of CEDLAF	All
6.	2nd Meeting of the forum for Election of Chair	SB
7.	Election of Chair and Vice Chair	SB
8.	Update National Access Forum for Wales	AJW
9.	Agenda Items for next meeting and date of next meeting	All
10.		

## Attendees

Simon Billington	SB	CCBC
Sophie Birchall Rogerson	SBR	CCBC
Bethan Roberts	BR	CCBC (minutes)
Cllr Goronwy Edwards	GE	CCBC
Paul Frost	PF	Outdoor Partnership/ Landowner
Heather Fitzgerald	HF	AONB
Tom Woodall	TW	Local DCC resident
Kevin Slattery	KS	Conwy Valley Ramblers
Hugh Crosswood	HC	Previous forum member
Adrian Walls	AW	DCC
Howard Sutcliffe	HS	AONB in DCC
Hannah Arndt	HA	DCC/ previous forum secretary
Duncan Barratt	Apologies	

## MINUTES

Item		Action
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome, Introductions</b>	
1.1	SB welcomes everyone to the meeting. Attendees introduce themselves.	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Next steps for CEDLAF</b>	
2.1	<p>SBR started the meeting and explaining the reason for the meeting is to reconnect members and get the forum up and running again.</p> <p>SBR presented the CCBC Website and explained that the pages have been updated to inform the public and seek applications for 12-20 representatives to create a new Forum. She explained that the group will be driving future improvement on the existing right of way network and stressed the importance of making the most of engaging with the public to get a diverse group of members.</p> <p>SBR advised that the online application form is now open and provided a demonstration on how to apply.</p> <p>SBR invited the group to suggest an appropriate closing date for applications and it was agreed that applications forms will be accepted until the end of summer.</p> <p>AW expresses his concerns with not having a balanced forum.</p> <p>SBR advised that social media posts will be planned between now and the closing date to encourage applicants and asked the members of the meeting to reach out to anyone who they feel would be suitable in order to get more people involved.</p>	

	<p>HS explained that there has been an increase in planning applications for diversification into tourism by local farmers and states that there should be more involvement from the farming community within the forum.</p> <p>SB suggested that the group should ideally have a good balance of both users of PROW and landowners advising that Local Authorities are often the middle party between the two, therefore the forum would be a good place for both sides to group and work together.</p> <p>SB suggested having land agents as a representative and reiterated the importance of sharing the news that applications are now open with as many people as possible.</p> <p>AW suggested NRW and WG as important bodies to have involved as they are able to respond to issues that Local Authorities may not be able to or can assist them with the ability of taking action.</p> <p>SB suggested that future forums offer a hybrid meeting solution to provide easy access to the group for all, which could also result in better attendance.</p>	
2.2	<p>TW expressed that the time projected to establish the forum is too long and asks if it's possible to bring forward. He also questioned the capacity the forum can work to by only having two meetings a year.</p> <p>AW responded that they will need to find out which members haven't attended to work out how many potential members there are before being able to set up the forum. He also added that the forum has historically had two meetings a year.</p> <p>HA stated that she will contact NRW to request they participate in meetings.</p> <p>TW questioned if the current meeting is to get old members involved, whether a new forum cannot be created and asks what should be done in the meantime.</p> <p>SBR explained that the current meeting was set up as an interim whilst the new forum is created, in order to build momentum for a new way forward and to give members of the previous forum an update on what has been and is planned to happen and seek their feedback.</p> <p>HS agreed that the current meeting shows intent and support and that there's a need for another meeting to keep momentum.</p>	<b>HA to get in touch with NRW</b>
2.3	<p>HS stated that he hoped quorum would be met in order to establish a chair, or an interim chair before a new chair could be elected in the summer. TW explained that these interim meetings cannot be called a 'Local Access Forum' and SBR agreed to change the interim meetings to CDLAM (Conwy and Denbighshire Local Access Meetings) until the new forum is legally formed towards the end of the year.</p> <p>GE stated that the Local Authority have a statutory duty so the forum should be meaningful and agrees to getting list of landowners and users together. GE then explained that there has never been more expectation</p>	<b>SBR to change meeting title</b>

	<p>for using land and so it's important to go about it the right way. He expressed the importance of having people who represent all kinds of usage.</p> <p>PF agreed that the interim group can't progress as anything other than an advisory group. He stated that at the end of the last forum in 2019 it was said that the forum was 'finished'. PF expressed the need to look at why it has taken a long time to get to this point and explains that in the previous forum a lot of the same faces would turn up. However, a number would turn up uninformed and irregularly. Others often having attended but wouldn't contribute.</p> <p>PF further added that there's a need for more people in an advisory capacity to attend and shares concerns that the previous forums were very well represented by DCC but poorly supported by CCBC.</p> <p>PF questioned what commitment Conwy will give and if it's only a stamping exercise and explained that he had previously tried to get the forum re-established during covid.</p> <p>AW explains that it was difficult to start the meeting up again after Covid however Conwy were the ones to initiate the meeting. He appreciates PF's comments but knows that Conwy and in particular SBR has very much led the way in getting everyone to the meeting today.</p> <p>PF stated that he was told the forum previously couldn't progress as they weren't able to get a secretary, he had offered to take on the role but was told it was still not able to happen. PF feels that previously there was no will to continue with the forum but he is pleased to see new faces at the current meeting which fills him with positivity.</p> <p>SBR explained that she had only started her new role in June following a predecessors retirement and has tried to get measures in place to start making progress in setting up a new forum as soon as she had the capacity to do so.</p> <p>SB explained that there has also been a restructure within this timeframe and that CCBC are certainly not seeing the forum as a box ticking exercise. Pre interim meetings will be set up to get the right people involved and to get views from representatives in order to make things happen. SB reassures that the meeting is about moving forward and setting the scene on how future meetings and forums will look. SB says that he will take comments on board and needs to know the good and bad from the previous forums.</p>	
2.4	<p>KS expressed the importance for the forum to be made available for people to access. He stated that the Covid period gave publicity to the local area bringing problems with parking and suggested engaging with a member from Public Transport to resolve issues and getting an efficient public transport system.</p> <p>HS agreed and noted that the bus from Corwen to Bangor is fantastic and needs to be publicised and integrated into the work that we do.</p>	

2.5	<p>SBR proposed to action BR as an interim secretary role and suggested having an advisory meeting with specific topics.</p> <p>AW proposed having a structure where the members bring issues to the secretary to run through with the chairman who will then facilitate matters the group want to talk about, so the Local Authorities are not leading the group to certain issues.</p> <p>TW expressed the need for the forum to know what is planned so members can advise on the work but equally the forum members will need the opportunity to bring forward issues they believe needs addressing further, to set a level of working that meets balance and that isn't too strategic, that shows why the Local Authority have to look at specific issues, but the forum can also bring certain issues forward.</p> <p>GE stated that from a Local Authority perspective they will do their best to achieve a statutory role however, how the stakeholders come together to resolve issues is up to them. CCBC will always try and complete their statutory duties although there will be 2 million less in the budget to resolve these issues and that CCBC must be clear on what funding they have to be able to know what's achievable.</p> <p>PF questioned if finances can be gained from Government grants or from other places. He believes it was controversial that £177,000 was used on a cycle path and no publicity or consultation was given on the spending of that money. He says that the forum will give an opportunity to say that it's not a good way to spend money.</p> <p>GE explains that a levelling up bid was won for Conwy Valley but the spending will be influenced by Welsh Government which will make some people happy and some not.</p> <p>SBR encouraged everyone to use 'report it' so CCBC can see all issues that have been put forward in order to make informed decisions on how to spend money. She expressed the need to be transparent on how CCBC spend money and how they choose the work. But the forum will need to provide information so CCBC can see all priorities and help make the decisions and promote the work.</p> <p>AW expressed that the problem with active travel is that when there's an open consultation, they receive a lot of responses for access projects and campaigns for areas that are not in that location. He explained that there are transport plans where the money can only be spent in certain areas.</p>	
3.0	<p><b>Conwy and Denbighshire updates on Access Improvement Grants (CCBC / DCC)</b></p>	
3.1	<p>SBR presented a Power Point of some of the work that CCBC has undertaken on PROW in the recent months and expressed that she would like to collate a catalogue throughout the year of completed and proposed work to give an insight to what's been undertaken to date and what is highlighted as potential future works pending funding approval.</p> <p>HS suggested that a presentation will help people to suggests other locations that are in similar state.</p>	

	<p>SBR agreed and proposes using the catalogue to also promote usage.</p> <p>KS stated he was able to put some previous images on the Rambler's page that showed everyone what had been done and the positive face of Conwy. He also stressed the importance of showing before and after images and thanked SBR.</p>	
3.2	<p>PF asked if there's any work being done to alleviate an alternative route in Black Cat and how are the PROW are currently being inspected.</p> <p>GE responded that he is in discussion with NRW and RSPB, CCBC will need 2 million out of the 20 million it will cost to undertake the works. GE described different phases for the works in particular Glan Conwy.</p> <p>SB stated that in terms of current work CCBC do not have a dedicated PROW inspecting resource. There's a 5% inspection being conducted every year by students to assess access. CCBC promotes use of people reporting issues and are very reactive to any that are logged depending on the department who is responsible for the maintenance. SB explained that CCBC do not have a PROW Officer, but the responsibility is spread to a wider team of Area Maintenance Officers who have all undertaken a PROW course so that they are qualified to deal with any query.</p> <p>PF clarified that he asked for two reasons, one being that a student asked to cross his land to inspect a ROW that had been blocked by a neighbour for years and was wondering what the outcome of that inspection was. The second reason was that at the last forum he had presented that idea of recruiting volunteers from the Ramblers to do this. He mentions that Mr and Mrs Buckley who represented the Ramblers would be positive to being recruited to walk the paths but would need to know which sections as it's hard to know which ones to tackle first. PF asks for DCC and CCBC's opinion of using volunteers to do this?</p> <p>SB advised that CCBC have restructured and centralised the county wide functions and that SBR is passionate about driving the Local Access Forum forwards, however, like GE has highlighted CCBC don't have the money to do everything, but they hope to use the new group to feed through their ideas on how limited budgets can be best spent and reassured the group that the ongoing commitment in working together as a forum is there.</p> <p>PF agreed to draw line in sand under previous group and is hoping to know if we can use volunteers going forwards and appreciates the difficulties that Local Authorities have.</p> <p>KS stated that from a Ramblers perspective they should always flag major issues with a path however if the issue is minor, they will not and refrain from making small complaints. He stated that it's difficult to walk all the footpaths however if PF would want to share which footpath was blocked on his land the ramblers can do the work.</p> <p>SBR stated that she has been in discussion with the ramblers in recent scheduled meetings and discussed the idea of establishing reports on what issues have been reported and where they are on the network and statistics.</p>	

	<p>TW asked if rights of way improvement plan has a hand in guiding where monies are spent/prioritised.</p> <p>SBR replied that she has started to build up a forward works programme which is then prioritised by risk, need and available grants/budgets. She also advised that the ROWIP is used to guide where we need to focus and seek funding to improve access along with other elements too like considering what biodiversity improvements can also be made.</p>	
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Conwy and Denbighshire Access updates (CCBC / DCC)</b>	
4.1	<p>HA presented a PowerPoint presentation to the group explaining that an Officer has been undertaking a survey of the PROW network within DCC and had prioritised the paths that need work.</p> <p>DCC had access to EU funding for community enhancement where PROW access are poor which was a great way to enhance the network. HA explained that DCC have been working with a recreation plan for grounds maintenance areas and bought issues up with carparking. They also commissioned a study on how to spread the load so people don't all go to the main carparks and to give them comfort routes where they know that they can park their car sensibly. Bridleways improvement was also undertaken.</p> <p>AW explained DCCs outcomes from their annual 5% survey as well as the outcomes from the survey undertaken on the whole of the network. He explains that the routes were then given a status:  Green – passed  Blue – minor inconvenience e.g., missing signpost  Purple – could walk but might not be a pleasant experience  Red – can't pass</p> <p>The colours above can now be used to identify communities that need more attention if there are more red and purple areas.</p> <p>They found that the West of county was worse than East and so can now focus on red areas and quickly address the issues.</p> <p>SBR expressed her appreciation with what HA and AW had presented as CCBC is also data rich and is developing similar approaches and suggested presenting such data/reports at future meetings as standard updates to show issues that both authorities have highlighted in order to maximise impacts.</p> <p>AW proceeded with the presentation and stated that the survey revealed that stiles that were put in 10 years ago are now failing and so they're now able to anticipate other stiles failing in other areas. He explained that as the wooden stiles are failing, DCC are trying to push gates although they cost substantially more to buy. However, they have found that the Farming community is more receptive to having gates on their property in instead of being given a kit to build and put in stile themselves. There's more liability with having a broken stile and the gate will be constructed to certain standard.</p> <p>HC mentioned that it will also mean that dogs will be able to go through more easily.</p>	

	<p>GE suggested that there is also more demand for disabled access which means that kissing gates are not in favour.</p> <p>AW explained that HA is currently working on projects and is promoting disabled routes.</p> <p>GE added that SBR is working on some access issues with footpaths for disabled users.</p> <p>TW suggested putting together a strategic decision for an improvement plan.</p> <p>AW agreed that it could be put in some form of forward works programme or assessment and to have a document in order to know what is being improved and show the tangible benefits.</p> <p>TW stated he has data that he would be able to share.</p>	
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Expressions of interest for chair and deputy chair of CEDLAF</b>	
5.1	<p>AW advised that the forum needs a chairman to guide meeting and steer to an order to avoid officers leading the group.</p> <p>SBR recommended that the current meeting is only to group people together whilst a new forum is established and that once the application process has been completed and a new forum set up should we decide upon a chairman.</p> <p>GE agreed that relevant members can't dictate who is chairman at present as there is currently a disproportionate number of officers in the meeting. There will need to be other representatives from NRW and National Trust for example present.</p>	
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	
6.1	<p>SBR opened up discussion and listed actions for the next meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to NRW</li> <li>• Change agenda name from 'forum' to 'meeting'</li> <li>• Create new email address</li> <li>• BR to circulate new email address</li> <li>• Everyone to reach out and inform suitable individuals about application page being open.</li> </ul> <p>SB added to create a comms plan and to share with Ramblers and relevant groups as a starting point.</p> <p>HA proposed DCC and CCBC share their comms plans and publicise the application form together to avoid a lack of representation. She also suggested that someone from the British Horse Society should be involved.</p> <p>HF suggested contacting the Royal Forestry Society.</p>	



	<p>AW questioned how CCBCs structure works as it would be useful to have a representative that can have a say on recreational use of unclassified roads. AW asks SB if the road network sits within his remit or is it within a different department.</p> <p>SB explained that traffic issues are a part of highway management and all highway management functions come under the same Head of Neighbourhood Services. He explained that SBR also has previous experience and a good background with highway law and has access to her previous asset management team. He reiterated that like DCC, CCBC is data rich and takes a data driven approach.</p> <p>SB asked if a chair is necessary and if everyone is happy to make BR the coordinator for the interim meetings. The role would entail taking in application forms and hopefully in around 3 months' time we will be in a position to determine who should become members of the new forum following the application process.</p> <p>SBR stated that she will also create and circulate a central contact email so members can email in any relevant ideas that they would like to discuss in the next meeting.</p> <p>SBR asked if anyone finds any issues on the PROW network to please still use 'report it' portal and not the generic email so there's an official audit train of how the issues are dealt with.</p>	
6.2	<p>GE queried everyone's availability for the next meeting and questioned the possibility of having it in the evening to get a better attendance.</p> <p>AW responded that once the forum is set up the members can come to an agreement on how frequent they meet and when.</p> <p>PF suggested setting up an agenda to show how the group will be moving forward and what will happen in next few months.</p> <p>SBR agreed and suggested sharing the agenda on the CCBC and DCC websites.</p> <p>PF stated that it will be good to be able to look back to see what has been done and see what's coming looking forward.</p>	
6.3	<p>TW says that between the interim stage he is here to support and create new forum opposed to looking at general forum business. He recommends an Officer lead forum chaired by the Local Authority with the purpose of focusing on getting a forum together. He suggested that the next time the group meets they should shy away from independent volunteers looking at application and can advise terms of reference to get the right level strategic.</p> <p>Working with disability barriers can be done in the interim.</p> <p>SBR responded that once the applications have been vetted, they can start drafting a terms of reference as starting point.</p>	

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