

Conwy East and Denbighshire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting
held on
Wednesday 14th December 2016
at
Rhug Estate, Corwen
at 13:30 pm

Local Access Forum Members

Tim Faire
Nicholas Lloyd
Heather Fitzgerald
Chris Marshall
Joanne Hughes
Cllr Martyn Holland
Hilary Davies
Kevin Slattery
Max Grant
Gwen Buttler
John Buckley
Joanne Hughes
Kay Culhane
Iona Pierce

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Hannah Arndt (Access Officer) LAF Secretary
Adrian Walls (Rights of Way Manager)
Howard Sutcliffe (Countryside Officer)
Helen Mrowiec (Assistant AONB Officer)

Representing Conwy County Borough Council

Sian Williams (Access Officer)
Caroline Turner (Definitive Map Officer)
Victoria Currie (Area Co-ordinator South)

Apologies for Absence were submitted from: -

Tony Proffit, Hugh Crosswood, Cllr Dave Cowans (CCBC), Dan Hurst and Jim Gaffney

1. Welcome

Tim Faire welcomed everyone to the meeting and was pleased to be Chairing the Local Access Forum. He would do his best to bring a considered and balanced approach to the meeting.

It was noted that the Active Travel Consultation presentation was cancelled.

2. Updates from Conwy CBC and Denbighshire CC since the LAF last meeting.

Sian Williams noted that the last Conwy LAF was held in 2011, Conwy CBC has a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) that runs from 2008-2017. Before the RoWIP the ease of use of access of paths in Conwy was assessed as being 20-30%. Over the past few years the Authority has been completing an annual 5% survey of the network and the recent survey results have concluded the paths with ease of use as 70%. The Authority is continuing to do a 5% survey, with the work being done by students.

Sian Williams now manages the RoIWP budget. She noted that a meeting of the Pilgrims Way Project had been held recently.

Another area of her work encompassed the Cerdded Conwy Community Walking Group who provide local guided walks. It is a group that the LAF might want to engage with in the future.

Conwy has no backlog of legal orders – temporary closures and diversions are dealt with by Caroline Turner.

Due to budget constraints, Rights of Way (RoW) work has been brought back to basics.

Since the Conwy LAF last met the structure of RoW management has changed in Conwy CBC. The RoW Team which use to employ 6 members of staff has now been disbanded. The new structure doesn't have a Countryside or a RoW Team. Lyn Davies manages the Open Spaces Department that also includes waste and parks. Three managers sit under Lyn Davies and under these are Area Coordinators. Victoria Curry is one of these coordinators who manage an area team on the ground. Any issues or complaints come to the Conwy CBC Office in Mochdre. Issues should be reported to Customer Services erf@conwy.gov.uk 01492 575337, please include as much detail as possible.

Sian Williams explained that she still has a central access role and Victoria Currie still provides advice although she is no longer the Rights of Way Officer. Victoria Currie will be leading the RoWIP review and the Authority are currently considering how the review will be undertaken. The RoWIP was consolidated in 2013 – reconsolidated in 2018 the document is fully digitised and available on the website.

John Butler asked how many RoW problems are logged at the moment and are they rising or falling.

RESOLVED

CCBC and DCC will feed back at the next meeting regarding the number of complaints relating to RoW.

Victoria Curry will send the link to the RoWIP for Hannah Arndt to circulate as it is difficult to find on the website.

Howard Sutcliffe noted that Adrian Walls had defined the role of the RoW Team who deal with the legal side of paths in the morning meeting. The Countryside Service have a role with promoted routes. The Service manage the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail, Wales Coast Path, regional paths, Hiraethog Way, North Wales Path, North Berwyn Way, Taith Tegid, Dee Valley Way and the Brenig Way.

Community Miles is a joint project between the RoW Team and the Countryside Service, with 12 published to date. These projects are a joint venture with community councils to create a local circular walk in local communities.

Denbighshire Countryside Service has 23 visitor counters that Hannah Arndt monitors that provide a degree of information of the usage of paths.

Denbighshire piloted Open Access and Open Access in Wales was launched in the County. Howard Sutcliffe noted that the map of Open Access was reviewed this year.

The Service manages Loggerheads Country Park, Brickfield Pond in Rhyl and Plas Newydd, Llangollen. 50 sites across the County from small sites to larger sites, such as Moel Famau Country Park come under the Countryside Service portfolio. Some are local sites and others are honeypot areas and some also have nature conservation designations. For example, Gronant Dunes is a Special Area of Conservation and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, it has the only Little Tern Colony in Wales, the Service has wardens on the ground to manage the site and complete access works.

Denbighshire Countryside Service also have Local Nature Reserves, the 4th was recently designated at Rhuddlan. Works have just been completed at Tomen yr Rhodwydd (Llandegla) that includes permissive access to the historic site.

The Service also manages some websites, which include Accessible Denbighshire that provides information on the County's most accessible sites. Staff try and secure further funds for project work, with a grant recently received for Access in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 3 applications have been submitted under the Welsh Government Sustainable Management Scheme in partnership with others - Grazing Animals, Ffridd to River and Graduate Training Projects.

Howard Sutcliffe explained that the Service was engaged with the Future Landscapes work that is being led by the Welsh Government to look at the future of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Wales.

The area also include the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site (WHS) – with a new website recently launched. The WHS sits within Wrexham, Denbighshire and Shropshire.

Kevin Slattery asked if the Service worked with the North Wales Wildlife Trust.

Howard Sutcliffe responded that Denbighshire Countryside Service works in partnership with the Wildlife Trust on a number of Projects, for example the Living Landscape project which is looking at conservation in a particular area, including invasive species and dormice. The Grazing Animals project is also a partnership with the Trust.

Adrian Walls noted that access projects have also been delivered in partnership with the Trust. A new cycle path was developed by Denbighshire at a North Wales Wildlife Trust Site - Gors Maen Llwyd, Llyn Brenig, the Trust have agreed to dedicate the route.

Cllr Martyn Holland commended the Community Miles project. There is a demand for Community Miles projects, the scheme not only promotes a walk, but also highlights local businesses. Cllr Martyn Holland would like people to come and

enjoy the area, but also to spend money in the shops and pubs. In addition, the project upgraded the footpaths which is also of benefit.

Howard Sutcliffe mentioned that the communities of Llandegla and Llanarmon yn Ial have been very successful in keeping their community shops and pub open and are beacons in times when other areas are losing their facilities. Cllr Martyn Holland noted that the visitors are key to keeping these open. Llandegla is also on the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail and many walkers stop for coffee and cake in the village shop.

Tim Faire agreed that visitors are important in keeping facilities open, which are then also available for the local community.

Max Grant suggested a presentation on Community Miles Project in the future.

RESOLVED

To have a presentation about Community Miles at a future meeting.

Howard Sutcliffe mentioned that improvements had also been done to extend the car park at Loggerheads, car parking income comes back to the Service which enables these sites to be maintained.

3. Priority of Work

Hannah Arndt referred to the Terms of Reference for the Local Access Forums in the file provided to Members. It sets out information about meetings, expenses and administration.

Sub Groups

Max Grant noted that in the last session of the Conwy LAF a number of subgroups had been established: Policies and Procedures, Equine, Access for All, RoWIP. The groups composed of 3 -6 members and then reported back to the full LAF.

Hannah Arndt referred the members to Section 4 - Meetings in the LAF guidance which states that LAF subgroups are self-managing, the chair of the subcommittee is responsible for making the arrangements for those meetings. In Denbighshire LAF task and finish groups were established when the group had specific areas of work to complete, for example Glasdir consultation, rather than an ongoing groups.

RESOLVED

Sub groups to be established as and when required.

Budgets

Cllr Martyn Holland noted that budgets could become a priority area in the future.

Volunteers

Cllr Martin Holland mentioned that his constituency has an active group of volunteers that will undertake work on behalf of the community, this is something that should be encouraged.

Site Visits

Howard Sutcliffe noted that the location of meetings should be discussed, he asked where Members would like to hold their meetings. Denbighshire LAF use to have site visits to look at completed or proposed work – some possible suggestions include Offa's Dyke Path, undergrounding work is being done in Bodfari.

Guest speakers

Joanne Hughes commented that it would be useful to invite guest speaker come to the forum on particular issues to enable Members to learn from the experience of others. Tim Fair agreed that this would be a good idea.

Donate a gate

Kevin Slattery raised a project that has been piloted in the Isle of White to donate gates on paths. For example, there are hundreds of memorial benches in Llandudno that have been donated by people. The Isle of White has a scheme where people can pay for a gate to replace a stile and has a plaque in the middle. It has the advantage of people paying for the items of furniture and it is a gate which improves access for people. Kevin Slattery has already mentioned it to Llandudno Town Council – is this something that could be considered by the LAF.

Howard Sutcliffe responded that people tend to bring plastic flowers, teddies, shirts, scarfs etc to memorial benches or trees that can become a management issue for the Authority to deal with. It is also a sensitive issue if the gate or bench needs to be moved or replaced in the future. The principle is good, but any donation should be anonymous.

Adrian Walls said that the Forum could lead the discussion on prioritising areas to change stiles to gates.

Cllr Martyn Holland noted that the village Conservation Society might like to buy a gate.

The RoWIP review

Victoria Currie suggested that this should be a rolling agenda item, there might not be much to say at some meetings, but the Forum should receive an update about the process.

Access for All

Nick Lloyd noted that this was the first time he has been closely involved with a Local Authority Committee and that he had learnt a great deal. He would be interested in an agenda item to discuss and receive information about access for all.

It was noted that a presentation about accessible work could be presented to the LAF.

Active travel consultation

The Conwy Active Travel consultation ends 31st March, therefore it depends when the next meeting of the LAF is held whether or not this would be suitable for discussion. Denbighshire's consultation will have ended before the next meeting. Members can submit comments in their own right.

RESOLVED

Hannah Arndt to circulate a note to members to put forward any further suggestions to the Chair who will summarise these.

Tim Faire noted that the LAF has come up with a decent list of items and thanked members for their contributions.

4. Future dates

Hannah Arndt noted that the LAF should meet a minimum of twice a year, varying venues and time of day as some people work. Howard Sutcliffe stressed that the Chair and Vice Chair should decide and that a field trip would be a good starter for this forum. Cllr Martyn Holland suggested trying to meet quarterly and proposed March, June, September and December.

Llanrwst was suggested as a venue by Sian Williams and possibly a site visit to the Crafnant Trail. Victoria Curry will contact the officer responsible for the Conwy Active Travel consultation.

The following suggestions were received:

Wednesday 8th of March – Llanrwst, Morning meeting and afternoon site visit site visit to be arranged by Sian Williams.

June – evening meeting Llandegla Mountain Bike Centre – possible site visit community miles / tourist point at St Tegla Church / Offa's Dyke. Jim Gaffney could possibly provide an item about mountain biking.

September – Coastal Conwy and the Great Orme – invite the tenant and the National Trust.

December - evening meeting without a site visit, possibly Loggerheads. It was also suggested that a site visit could be arranged to Iona Pearce's Farm.

5. AOB

Hannah Arndt explained that Councils do not normally have AOB, members need to submit that they wish to raise at the meetings.

Expenses sheets can collect from Hannah Arndt. The forum can cover travel costs and any associated carer costs relating to attending the meetings.