

Conwy East and Denbighshire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on
Wednesday 8th March 2017
at
Glasdir, Llanrwst
at 10:20 am

Local Access Forum Members

Gwen Butler (Vice Chair)
Heather Fitzgerald
Chris Marshall
Joanne Hughes
Cllr Martyn Holland
Hilary Davies
Kevin Slattery
Max Grant
John Buckley
Kay Culhane
Iona Pierce
Toni Proffitt
Hugh Crosswood
Tom Woodall

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Hannah Arndt (Access Officer) LAF Secretary
Adrian Walls (Rights of Way Manager)
Howard Sutcliffe (Countryside Officer)
Helen Mrowiec (Senior Recreation Officer)
Ben Wilcox-Jones (Sustainable Travel Officer)

Representing Conwy County Borough Council

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

Observers

Paul Mitchell (Natural Resources Wales)
Mr Culhane
Simultaneous Translation Service

Apologies for Absence were submitted from: -
Tim Faire, Nicholas Lloyd, Dan Hurst, Jim Gaffney

1. Apologies and Minutes of the Last Meeting

HA listed apologies received. Gwen Butler (GB) acting as Vice Chair asked all attendees to give a brief introduction and an overview of their interests relevant to the Forum as there were some members not present at the last meeting.

The minutes of Meeting 1 were checked for accuracy agreed by the Forum, HA to request missing member introductions and circulate to the Forum. Amendments to the minutes of Meeting 2 were noted by HA. The minutes were then agreed as an accurate record by the Forum.

AP1	HA to request missing member introductions and circulate
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Meeting 1, Item 2: Request for details of complaints received by CCBC and DCC

Adrian Walls (AW) explained that DCC used a system called a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and encourage people to report issues via this system. People report rights of way issues via a direct rights of way email address and by emailing and

telephoning the footpath inspector in an effort to have issues fast-tracked. AW reported that this had worked previously, however he insists that all issues and complaints now be logged via CRM so there is a method of traceability.

AW found a substantial amount of data relating to rights of way with 240 A4 sheets of complaints (3-4 per sheet) for the past 3 years. On analysing the past year AW found 256 complaints, 165 of which were reported by people living in the county, 10 reports were from people living outside of the county who had an account in the CRM and around 15-20 were anonymous. AW summarised that 1 in 6 complaints through the CRM system came from out of the county. AW added that the RoW team have started using handheld devices to monitor the network and around 60 complaints have so far been added to via this method with a 50:50 division of reports coming from in/out of the county.

Kevin Slattery (KS) asked if any of the reports were repeat complaints. AW replied that 2 or 3 issues had repeat reports and referenced a blocked bridleway which had been reported by 2 or 3 people as one of these examples; however the majority are singular reports.

Siân Williams (SW) agreed with AW. SW explained that the Customer Service Centre in Mochdre take the complaints and issues and log on a system called Synollogy. SW advised that not all footpath issues were logged via the system but she had the available data back to 2012. SW went on to say that 1063 complaints relating to RoW in the Conwy East area had been reported since 2012, 264 of which were enforcement matters and 799 maintenance issues. SW was unable to find out if the issues were reported from within or outside the county.

Max Grant (MG) asked how many of the issues were ongoing. SW was unsure and AW didn't look into resolved issues, just the volume and the location of those reporting.

AP 2	HA to circulate links to LAF and RoWIP pages on CCBC and DCC websites	Completed
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Meeting 2, Item 3: Sub Groups

MG asked if now would be an appropriate time to set up a Glastir Sub-Group as the funding had been approved for another 12 months.

AW had been in contact with Jane Tibbott at Welsh Government, the LAF contact for Glastir Advanced. There is still uncertainty as to what WG will now allow LAFs to add and WG see no benefit to producing further Action Plans. GB said she would highlight the matter at the next Chairs' meeting in April.

AP 3	HA to contact Jane Tibbott to clarify current situation and establish if WG are still taking suggestions.	Completed
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Meeting 2, Item 3: Donate a Gate

KS has tried to contact the Donate a Gate scheme and is awaiting a response. KS will update at a future meeting.

Meeting 2, Item 3: Access for All

MG asked AW if details about changing stiles to gates could be brought to a future meeting. AW confirmed and highlighted that DCC were currently having success along the river Clwyd. AW explained that there is some resistance from landowners, however the biggest issue is cost. A stile costs around £40 and can be installed by the

landowner/manager, the cost of the gate and installation is around £300. DCC have been able to provide many updates through the RoWIP funding. Cllr Martyn Holland (MH) added that this is a hot topic and suggested it be an agenda item for a future meeting as by then the authorities will have their budgets for the forthcoming year and it may be an opportunity to see where voluntary groups can be involved.

AP 4	Future Agenda Item: Easier Access in the countryside (replacing stiles with gates or gaps)
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2. Active Travel presentations and Q&A session with Paul Smith (CCBC) and Ben Wilcox-Jones (DCC)

Paul Smith (PS) and Ben Wilcox-Jones (BWJ) gave a joint presentation covering the Active Travel Act Wales, the work of Conwy and Denbighshire around the Act and what members of the LAF and residents of the counties can do.

BWJ gave an overview of the WG guidance explaining that the purpose of the Act is to make Active Travel an option for short journeys, whether that be travelling to school, work or the shops. BWJ explained that local authorities are required to produce Active Travel maps and to add to the maps annually and implement Active Travel improvements on the ground annually. BWJ mentioned that the definition of Active Travel is “using an alternative to motorised travel to work, education, health and leisure”. This does not include specifically created mountain bike trails for example.

PS continued by showing a series of examples of current access provision and suggesting how they could, or have been improved. PS talked about how current barriers can impact on some, but not others and explained that Active Travel tries to look at the “worst” form of access and improve to make them accessible to all users. BWJ added that the Act is accompanied by design guidance to encourage best practice and the guidance is used by colleagues implementing schemes on the ground.

Hilary Davies (HD) questioned an example given in Penmaenmawr. PS advised that he is trying to improve the access provision on a road through Penmaenmawr. HD mentioned that she lives near a school where there is no pavement and asked could this benefit.

BWJ advised everyone look at the design guidance and respond to the consultations and adding to the INM. The LA can then apply for funding to achieve these improvements, but if issues are not added to the map they cannot be funded for 3 years.

HD asked how issues are added to the INM – BWJ advised through LA officer knowledge and as a result of the ongoing consultation. PS added that the consultation ends on 31/03/2017 in Conwy.

HC asked if any effort would be made to educate motorists adding that in European countries where there are more cyclists and better infrastructure, drivers appear more aware of cyclists. PS was unsure and not aware it was currently in his remit, but mentioned that lots of studies suggest that higher levels of cycling can lead to better academic results. PS also mentioned that obesity is now one of the biggest drains on the NHS and this could be positively impacted through Active Travel.

KC suggested it could be made illegal to park in cycle lanes. BWJ mentioned that a Traffic Regulation Order can be issued and alluded to an example near Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in Bodelwyddan.

AW asked if Active Travel maps were zoned. There are some priority areas and an area must have a population over 2,000, but the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act will bring smaller communities back into play. BWJ went on to add that CCBC and DCC welcome comments from all communities, size is not an issue as other schemes can be looked into.

HM asked if there was any flexibility with Corwen which was omitted from the INM. BWJ said there will be opportunities through the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

HD asked if there is any way of knowing if issues have already been recorded. They are noted in the ERM. JB asked for clarification of what can be funded. Street furniture is not eligible, but traffic calming is. Larger schemes are usually funded by Welsh Government and smaller schemes can be looked into by the Local Authority. PS reiterated that any concerns should be reported. MH asked if this would affect Commuted Sums. It won't but the authorities are trying to work with new developments for better access and to gain funding.

CM added that the e-bike definition may need revision HC suggested the Pedalec definition – electric assist but you do need to pedal.

AW raised rural fringe areas, of which there are a lot in the DCC and CCBC, PS added that the guidelines were written in Cardiff, but work is ongoing for changes to be made to better reflect north Wales. MH added that the current plan is too urbanised. PS advised that they are providing feedback to WG regularly and are looking at design options for North Wales. Also working with Sustrans around training as it is common for children to lose interest in cycling at around 18 when starting work. Current work is trying to provide routes for people to cycle to work and to try and keep people cycling through life.

TP added that horse riding is not classed as an active travel mode of transport and questioned the use of cycle lanes by horses. TP gave an example of Sarn Lane in Bodelwyddan, which has a cycle lane, but the road is not safe for riding along to link bridleways and TP has used the cycle lane for safety, giving way to cyclists and walkers. TP asked if horses and riders could be a consideration for future improvements. AW questioned whether the prohibition of horses on cycle paths is a regulation or law as he is not sure if there is an offence of riding a horse on a cycle path.

HD asked about the Active Travel view of signage such as End of Cycle Track and Cyclists Dismount. End of Cycle Track is used under certain regulations and Cyclists Dismount is used where routes can't be widened and End of route/please re-join the carriageway would be more suitable. PS added that signage on the ground will take time to catch up with guidance – adults can use own common sense when appropriate to stop or dismount.

To find the Active Travel information and consultations:

DCC – website > consultations >Active Travel
walkingandcycling@denbighshire.gov.uk

CCBC – Active Travel search on website
activetravel@conwy.gov.uk

AP 5	HA to circulate details to members	Completed
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3. RoWIP Review Update

VC advised that she is currently working on a timetable for CCBC. The draft is due to be completed by November 2018. VC will let HA know when the timetable is published so she may circulate. AW advised that progress is similar for DCC although they are slightly behind CCBC as Denbighshire was the last authority to publish a RoWIP. The next 12 months will be used to look at what has been achieved through the RoWIP funding and what the aspirations are for the network. AW added that all authorities in Wales have been reliant on RoWIP funding, some for funding staff.

HM added that the survey of the network by DCC was taken from an idea in the previous LAF meeting where SW uses her graduates to carry out the survey. This demonstrates that we are already learning from each other.

HD asked how much grant was allocated. DCC received £40,022 in 2016/17 and CCBC received around £47,000. A calculation around population and RoW network is carried out to decide amount given. In comparison Cardiff receives £30,000 because although it has a small network, it has a large population help.

MG asked if it was appropriate for members to advise on projects. AW said most of DCC budget is used to match fund bigger projects such as the kissing gate work with the AONB. He added that with the Community Miles project we need community councils who are willing and DCC is already working through a waiting list of willing communities waiting for funding to come available. AW advised that £10,000 is allocated to Community Miles, £8-10,000 allocated to bridleways because only 16% of network is available to horses and bikes, but only 50% of this available network is open and useable. DCC can't justify spending the whole grant on footpaths, there must be a balance with user pressures.

SW added that CCBC already have a number of project ideas on the shelf from complaints and maintenance work and this is more than the RoWIP allocation, however the projects are waiting to go if other funding becomes available.

MG asked about creating a RoWIP sub group as Snowdonia North LAF have done. GB advised that sub-groups should be self-managing and feedback. MG also asked about the RoWIP report. AW advised he is currently working on DCC's and can bring to a future meeting. As part of the RoWIP review AW will be looking back at the past 10 years and producing a report of the achievements as well as looking forward to the future of the network.

4. Open Access Review Update

Paul Mitchell (PM) gave an update of the Open Access Review. Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) held the statutory duty to produce open access maps which showed open country (mountain, moor, heath, down) and common land (from common register). CCW were required to review the maps every ten years. The review in north east Wales started in 2012 because the Berwyn was the first area of designated open access. Draft maps were published showing proposed amends, areas to be deregistered due to the land changes if land no longer contained designated habitats and areas to be registered if habitat has appeared which falls into the designation.

Consultation took place through the LAFs and wider consultation and appeals were made which were then investigated. In DCC area one appeal was made by a landowner, which was not upheld. In CCBC East no appeals were made against the provisional map. In SNP 10 appeals were made. DCC lost 5.27 hectares of open country on the new conclusive map in Llangwyfan.

Natural Resources Wales will be making the new maps available at their office and online at the beginning of April 2017.

DCC hold data but AW is unsure how old it is. PM advised that the conclusive map was produced in 2014. AW to speak to Alun Price to check DCC has most recent data. VC unsure which data CCBC holds.

MG asked of NRW could apply pressure to Ordnance Survey to update the 1:25,000 online maps as soon as possible and the paper maps in the next reprint.

5. Cerdded Conwy

SW and Jutta Orenz-Kubis gave an overview of Cerdded Conwy, a collaboration project with the Town Council which worked with communities to gain knowledge about routes available locally. Leaflet packs were then produced to promote the routes on offer. Promotion was carried out through guided walks. This approach was popular and in the second year a programme of walks was devised. Feedback requested from walkers each year helps to improve the scheme. The project has been funded by NRW and more money each year is made available for the walking festival.

In only a couple of years Cerdded Conwy has grown from 6 walks a week to 47 walks in July for the festival. Due to demand more walks were put on and Cerdded Conwy works closely with CCBC rights of way team as it is a big job to bring everything together. The project was facing cuts and reduced resources, however Sport Wales have been able to provide funding for Walk Leader Training.

Jen Towill championed this approach, offering leaders from the community training to lead walks, produce risk assessments and insurance. In 2012 the group became constituted and a walking programme was delivered through the year, not just one month of the year.

Jutta mentioned that the work would not be possible without the support from SW and CCBC

Three leader types are trained

Hill and Moorland

Coast and Lowland

Mountain

New members are given training in navigation and first aid and a group shelter, first aid kit and uniform is provided. Cerdded Conwy are able to support other groups such as Trefriw Walking Festival. They also have a website and a Facebook page to keep people up to date.

GB asked if community councils have copies of definitive maps. All CCBC communities were given a disc containing the consolidated map in 2013. Caroline used to provide an A1 map, but now it is done digitally. The Ramblers are the main user group. AW added that all community councils are entitled to a copy and the definitive map information is all available online. AW is looking into providing a

wall map for the community of Llandyrnog listing all the path numbers and making it easier for problems to be reported. This could be rolled out across the county.

HS asked if there was a charge for Cerdded Conwy walks. SW said a donation of £2 per person is suggested and the money goes into Cerdded Conwy. Walks are bookable so questions can be asked for insurance purposes.

MH asked about limits on numbers. Mountain walks are 10:1 and moderate walks are 20:1. These numbers have been altered through feedback received from previous walks. The walks are set and where possible support local businesses. Most participants are local to Conwy and north Wales, some people travel from Liverpool. Promotion is via the website and some walking magazines.

6. Trefriw Walking Festival

After lunch instead of a site visit Gill and Tony from Trefriw Walking festival gave a presentation about the festival and its website. The festival runs 19th – 21st May 2017 and has evolved with support from Cerdded Conwy and CCBC.

Funding has helped to support the delivery of the walking festival, walkers are welcome scheme, Trefriw Trails leaflet packs (8 bilingual trail maps all on right of way) and the Mill Race, a 12 ½ mile fell race which has been added to the Welsh Open Championships in 2017. To tie in with the Year of Legends this year's festival will feature storyteller Fiona Collins and poet laureate Martin Dawes.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday June 8th Llandegla 5:30pm