

Conwy East and Denbighshire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on

Wednesday 19th June 2019 at

Corwen Sport Pavilion at 14:00

Local Access Forum Members

Tim Faire (Chair) TF
Paul Frost PF
Tom Woodall TW
Laura Crawford LC
Kevin Slattery KS
Chris Marshall CM
Duncan Barratt DB
Hugh Crosswood HC
Hilary Davies HD
Heather Fitzgerald HF

Representing Conwy County Borough Council

Sian Williams (Access Warden)
Victoria Currie (ERF Area Coordinator South)
Caroline Turner (Definitive Map Officer)

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Hannah Arndt (Access and Recreation Officer and LAF Secretary)
Howard Sutcliffe (AONB and Ranger Service Manager)
David Shiel (Senior Countryside Officer (AONB))
Huw Rees (Countryside and Heritage Manager)

Apologies for Absence were submitted from: -

Cllr Martyn Holland, John Buckley, Gwen Butler, Jo Hughes, Kay Culhane, Max Grant, Adrian Walls, Peter Rutherford (observer). Toni Mayne has offered her resignation to the Forum. Cllr Milne will no longer be attending as there has been a restructure within CCBC. We will offer a welcome to Cllr Greg Robbins at the next meeting.

Actions and Notes of the Last Meeting

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. HA listed apologies received. The Chair asked if the notes of the last meeting were an accurate record. Proposed as accurate by Duncan Barratt and Tom Woodall.

Matters arising

Actions raised at the last meeting were as follows;

Action Point	Detail of Action	Current Situation
10.1	HA to circulate email response with the notes of the meeting	Completed
10.2	The Chair asked for a progress update at the next meeting on the ramp that is clogged up.	Sand clearance taking place once a month through the summer months
10.3	HA to circulate digital copy of the document	Completed

Donate a gate – KS asked if there was an update on this. Sian has allocated some time and will continue to develop this. KS highlighted that Powys county council is also working toward a scheme. Conwy could be the first in Wales.

Sand on west shore – TF said that action has been taken, which makes life a bit easier on that area or path. LC confirmed it is better at the moment. SW added that the path was being cleared on a monthly basis at the moment and any problems can be reported through Sian.

Action Point 11.1	KS to deliver presentation at next meeting.
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NRW Area Statements – Presentation by Richard Dearing

Richard Dearing (RD) is the Senior Natural Resource Planning Officer for North East Wales. Nia Williams, based in Bangor could attend a future LAF meeting from a Conwy perspective. Nia was not able to attend today.

RD provided an update on the Environment Act Wales and extended an invitation to LAF members to attend workshops, with printed details of dates for North East and North West Wales circulated.

Area statements will facilitate implementation of Natural Resource policy and set out what NRW and others can do to achieve SMNR principles. They will bring together what we know, need to know and don't know and will contribute to seven wellbeing goals set out in Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

There will be seven area statement areas – CEDLAF area covers two – North East and North West.

Timeline for the process

Phase 1 – area profiles and stakeholder mapping – spring 2019

Phase 2 – understanding priorities, risks and opportunities – summer and winter 2019

Phase 3 – laying the foundations for delivery – spring 2020 (This is when the 1st area statement will be published)

RD gave an outline of the North east area profile and themes under discussion, which include people and place, access and recreation, natural resources and our environment.

North East emerging themes include developing outdoor tourism opportunities and protecting rural and green infrastructure.

Questions to Richard:

HC asked how this would be funded.

NRW are funding the process at present, but are looking for funding to deliver SMNR principles.

CM asked if the marine environment is covered.

Yes 16km is included and the marine/terrestrial boundary is very important.

PF has looked on the website but can't find information.

There is currently an interactive pdf with maps and other information, but it is too big to email. NRW is working to make this available through new GIS software being developed. All information will be available at the workshops to look at. NRW would like to make it publicly available in the future.

PF was not clear about where we are in process.

Currently in the area profile stage. This is not the final statement and is not something NRW will impose – it will be co-developed. NRW have an idea of emerging themes but purpose of the workshops is to try and find out what other people's issues and priorities are.

Visitor Appraisal Study – Presentation by David Shiel

David Shiel (DS) reported back to the LAF on the results of the recent visitor appraisal study, carried out by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), which focused on six sites within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site. The full report will be circulated to the LAF.

Economic value

The report estimates 1.1 million visitors to 6 sites with 449 full time equivalent jobs supported in and around the sites. The report appraises the economic value of each site individually and looks at the individual spend per visitor to sites. Sites in the Dee Valley had higher individual spend than those in the Clwydian Range. This is thought to be because the majority were holiday makers and spend is higher when staying.

HC asked why spend is higher for Moel Famau than Loggerheads

Many people spoken to were camping and much of the spending was in Mold for fuel, food etc. Spend was surprisingly low at Loggerheads, but café does very well.

PF asked if the report was relating to tourists and/or residents

The Panorama attracts many local people and much of the spending for panorama and Pontcysyllte was in Llangollen rather than smaller communities.

Wellbeing

The value of these sites to wellbeing is estimated as £8.8million per annum. They provide a contribution to health at a time when obesity in Wales is a problem at all ages and physical inactivity is a major contributing factor. NEF looked at visit length to the area and put some costs against these:

- Impact on cardio vascular disease - £1.2 million NHS costs forgone
- Impact on type 2 diabetes £36.8 million NHS costs forgone

This is helping to keep people out of the health system along with other initiatives such as the Nature for Health project and Healthy Walks scheme run by our team.

Social impacts

Traffic congestion and issues of overcrowding were common issues raised at Loggerheads, Moel Famau and Horseshoe Falls. Nearly 40% of visitors felt these sites were worse than other areas.

Most communities felt the sites made a positive contribution to the community apart from Horseshoe Falls where the dynamic has changed quite quickly and recently.

Environmental impacts

Litter is a common issue raised and calculations show that 130 tonnes litter and 8.2 tonnes of dog poo is collected from Loggerheads annually and 4.7 tonnes of dog poo is removed from Moel Famau.

Its costs £17,500 annually to remove litter and dog poo from these 2 sites.

Impact on livestock - 14 sheep have been killed on Moel Famau that we know about in the last 3 years. It is difficult to put a cost on this as we can't account for all losses such as time, vets, abortion, losses later etc.

Mountain rescue – call outs on Moel Famau are up 300% from 3 in previous years to 9 in 2017 – 2018

Erosion costs £16,000 across the two sites (Loggerheads and Moel Famau)

However there are clearly huge benefits, both monetary and health and wellbeing benefits of these sites for very little investment and limited budgets. An action plan is being developed which will look to promote the economic and social value of sites in the AONB and will work through Destination Management Partnerships around promotion of the AONB.

Site specific actions include:

- Landscape design of the car park at Llantysilio green
- Dog campaign at Moel Famau
- Addressing erosion issues on cliff top at Loggerheads
- Additional parking and orientation information at Pontcysyllte
- Promotion of Ruthin and Denbigh at Moel Famau
- Addressing issues of erosion on the Panorama through the Our Picturesque Landscape project.

DS added that officers are still digesting the report and how to take it forward.

Questions to David

TF asked of the suggested £31 million spend, how much comes in to Denbighshire Council?

Some income from two car parks aids funding two Countryside Ranger posts.

The values in the report accounts for a lot of secondary spend.

CM said that one issue is parking on the A494 at Loggerheads, which isn't the country park's fault

DS agreed it is a much wider issue, which needs DCC highways and trunk roads agency to jointly address some of the issues.

CM added that people parking at Moel Famau on the verges cause issues just to avoid paying £1

Part of this issue is car parks are full by 11am at weekends. One question raised is do we make car parks bigger or try and send them somewhere else? Where do we send them? These sites are delivering an important role in health and wellbeing and getting people outdoors, so do we work to make these sites more resilient to the number of people wanting to visit them?

DS added that he will be working on the new AONB management plan over the next year and looking at how to zone areas. Need to be careful not to remove the tranquillity of areas while trying to spread the impact of increasing visitor numbers.

PF suggested providing a comparison of the economic value of the sites against the cost of the service to make people appreciate the value of the service we provide.

TF asked if the report showed up anything we didn't know?

Yes, spending figures were surprising. We were already aware of most of the issues raised.

TF asked if the results are in our favour in terms of budgets.

Yes, it strengthens the need for funding.

TW added that there are similar generic issues across the board and asked if there is anything Conwy have done to understand the relationship, particularly at the Great Orme.

Sally would be the best person to talk about this and perhaps a presentation could be given at a future meeting.

HC asked how accurate the survey was

It was a snapshot of visitors to the sites. Surveys were carried out in summer and autumn to look at attitude and spend. DS and NEF are happy that they spoke to enough people. Some assumptions were made based on Visit Wales and STEAM data but this must be done to get to some of the key indicators. NEF are well respected in this area of work.

Conwy Council Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan – Victoria Currie and Member discussion

TF offered the floor to LAF members as an opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions on the draft RoWIP document.

Victoria Currie (VC) had received comments from Peter Rutherford, Tom Woodall, Paul Frost, NRW and two comments from members of the public.

PF ran through a summary of his views and said he was determined to be negative after last meeting but realised working towards a strategic approach was sensible due to uncertainty, without having definitive reference to projects. Developing annual delivery plans will add meat to the bones. However the document suggests the main consultation will be with this Forum, but PF doesn't think the Forum has the correct local knowledge to influence the plans. They should input at a later stage not the setting.

CM highlighted that the previous plan was aspirational and the new one is very realistic. However he felt Conwy should be aspirational when setting targets rather than setting comfortable, achievable targets. At least you can review and look at other ways to deliver if you don't achieve something one year.

Hilary Davies (HD) raised issues around the delivery plan and believes it is critical to assess how we are doing. HD asked when will the LAF see the plans and when will the LAF review it.

VC added that when the final RoWIP is published the delivery plan will be developed with the LAF. This will occur in the autumn to tie in with financial budgets and it will be reviewed every quarter.

HD asked if it will be as detailed as number of fingerposts?

VC – It could be.

PF suggested reviewing in spring and summer to get plan ready to bid for money in the autumn. He added that some CCBC money can be held until autumn/winter, but to apply for external funding Conwy will need to think further ahead.

VC said the first plan will include what can be achieved from CCBC budget and then they will look for additional funding the following year.

CM asked about unclassified road

VC – they are not on the digital map so will have to speak to Highways.

HD asked if the National Park is included

Yes about 1/3 of Conwy is NP.

TW has put comments in to VC and was happy to discuss. He agreed it is a strategic document but thinks there needs to be more to it and more to the document as a whole. Need to look at where we have been, current picture and where we are going. Analysis should be more prominent rather than looking for an appendix. Felt there could be 10-15 more aims that could be added, but there are only five.

TW added he would like more detail about current resource provision, staffing, prioritising resources – how this is done. He would also like to see a level of aspiration of what we would like to achieve not just something strategic, which could be limiting if the political and funding landscape changes.

TW feels CCBC need to tell the story a bit more and acknowledge that the delivery plans will put meat on the bones, but the objectives need to be a bit more descriptive. It is an improvement plan and there is a need to identify some of these improvements and add innovative solutions. Where can the LAF get involved in developing this?

TW thanked CCBC officers for bringing the document to the Forum and presenting document and asked if there was any news on the DCC RoWIP – HA will take the question back as DCC Rights of Way were not able to attend the meeting.

Other matters:

Hilary asked if the notes could be posted to her.

Action Point 11.2	HA to send email to members to ask who would like to receive paper copies of notes.
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Date of forthcoming meetings:

Wednesday 4th September 2019

Wednesday 4th December 2019