

Conwy East and Denbighshire Local Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on
Thursday 11th January 2018
at
Nova, Beach Road West, Prestatyn
at 10:30am

Local Access Forum Members

Gwen Butler
Toni Mayne
Jim Gaffney
Jo Hughes
John Buckley
Max Grant
Kevin Slattery
Chris Marshall
Martyn Holland
Paul Frost
Don Milne
Hugh Crosswood

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Hannah Arndt (Access Officer and LAF Secretary)
Helen Mrowiec (Senior Recreation Officer)

Representing Conwy County Borough Council

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

Observers

Paul Mitchell (Natural Resources Wales)

Apologies for Absence were submitted from: -

Hilary Davies, Heather Fitzgerald, Kay Culhane, Dan Hurst, Tim Faire, Iona Pierce, Duncan Barratt.
Nick Lloyd tendered his resignation from the Forum.
Gwen Butler as Vice Chair led the meeting.

Actions and Notes of the Last Meeting

The Vice Chair asked if the notes of the last meeting were an accurate record. Proposed as accurate by Paul Frost and seconded by Tom Woodall. Actions raised at the last meeting were as follows;

Action Point	Detail of Action	Current Situation
AP 5.1	DCC and CCBC to feedback on potential 'Donate a Gate' scheme.	Agenda Item 11/01/2018
AP 5.2	HA to recirculate the Active Travel details	Completed
AP 5.3	HM to provide summary of discussion and circulate to members within a week of meeting	Completed

Glastir Advanced Agri Environment Scheme

Jane Tibbott (Glastir Advanced Officer) spoke to the Forum about how the Glastir Advanced scheme is run and how LAFs are involved in suggesting areas for permissive access through the scheme. The Glastir Advanced scheme has run since 2012. DEFRA is currently in discussion with Parliament regarding schemes post-Brexit, but no new schemes are on the horizon.

The permissive access element in Glastir is a continuation from the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme. Glastir must now also deliver on the Environment Bill and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The application period is currently closed. Applicants submitted expressions of interest (EOI) through their Rural Payments Wales online account. Officers are now going through the EOIs and selections are made based on WG priorities (Water and Carbon at present). At the end of spring 2018 officers will negotiate with farmers who made it through selection process.

Contract managers are currently working on 2019 contracts. Selection letters will go out with a list of layers and potential actions with negotiations to be carried out in spring/summer 2018. The process is all online. The applicant must accept the contract before 31/12/2018 for new agreements to start on 01/01/2019.

Criteria for application

Applicants must have a minimum 3 hectares of land registered in database (IACS). Farmers must also be registered with WG and have a customer number. Farmers must have full management control of land for the five year period of the agreement. Tenants can apply, however a tenant cannot be in one scheme and the landowner in another. Either the landlord or tenant is the recipient.

Agricultural land in Wales is eligible for Glastir. Under the Glastir Commons scheme, commons must be registered. Under the Glastir Woodland Scheme the land parcel number must be registered (minimum 0.5ha). EOI for woodland creation opens in April 2018.

What is Glastir Advanced?

Financial support is offered to landowners and land managers to undertake environmental works targeted to specific areas. Welsh Government liaise with partners (including NRW, Cadw, RSPB, and Butterfly Trust) to provide data which is used in the selection process. If works proposed through the EOI are not in targeted areas the proposal will not be successful. Farmers may need to change practices to align with WG priorities (carbon and water) E.g. To promote carbon sequestration in uplands land managers would decrease stocking of uplands in winter.

What are the main priorities?

Biodiversity, Landscape and the Historic Environment and Access are the main priorities. A two pronged approach to secure more access opportunities is used, primarily through LAFs and secondary through Farmer and WG Officer Negotiations.

Maps

There are 50 to 60 maps showing bird species locations, plant life, SSSIs, SACs, Forestry information about woodland and Environment Agency information about rivers. Information provided by LAFs is also on these maps.

Access map

The access map details 3 national trails, Wales Coast Path, National Parks and Cycle Routes, as a minimum. Anything fed in by LAFs is then added on.

Scoring

Each layer has a score and the size of farm determines the score. The scoring system is equitable to all farm types, farm sizes and farm enterprises.

When a farm is selected a letter and document listing the objective layers the farm lies on is generated. Interests can potentially change from farm to farm, even neighbours. Against the objectives are lists of management outcomes that could be achieved and a minimum of one action must be met for each layer identified.

Permissive access layers are optional however WG Officers strongly encourage this option where the LAF has suggested a link would be useful. Access areas and access linear routes are options and capital works can be claimed for associated furniture, BS standard and to accommodate disabled users.

If there is no active LAF, farmers looking to develop access can do so through the Local Authority rights of way department.

What is Glastir looking for from LAFs?

LAF knowledge – where access links are required such as to help minimise impact to honeypots and creating routes to viewpoints. If nothing is submitted by the LAF but the contract manager sees an opportunity, this is highlighted and the landowner can write to the LAF to ask them to submit the route. This was agreed by the LAF Chair's meeting as a suitable approach.

Questions

Martyn Holland asked if farmers have general access to the maps with biodiversity and historic layers. Jane Tibbott answered that the public all have access via the links on the WG website: <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/farming/schemes/glastir/glastir-advanced/?lang=en>

Jo Hughes asked if WG are interested in a national bridleway route from north to south Wales. JT stated that if the LAFs support the route, then it can be submitted. Information can still be submitted regarding access but JT has no idea what will happen to schemes after the 2019 agreements start, she is not sure if there will be another window. However anything submitted will be forwarded to any scheme that follows Glastir.

Paul Frost stated that the scheme is based on landowners being proactive and meeting the window. There may be instances where other partners see the need for an application so can landowners be approached?

JT answered that they cannot be approached by WG. It is a voluntary scheme and at present WG does not approach individual farms, but that is not to say other organisations cannot approach landowners and highlight an agri-environment scheme as a management approach.

John Buckley added that a condition of receipt of Glastir is that rights of way are kept open. What action should be taken if a right of way is blocked?

JT stated that this is part of the Whole Farm Code and farmers not paid to keep rights of way open. It is an obligation to comply with legal requirements – i.e. keep PRow open, do not damage SSSI etc. Contract

managers have links to PRoW officers to check all are open, however it is up to farmer and PRoW officer to liaise. Blockages can be referred to Rural Inspectorate Wales or brought to the attention of PRoW officers.

Helen Mrowiec added that because access is an optional element the payment is often not attractive because to many landowners increasing access a less favoured option. HM added that Denbighshire Council had been able to get two areas listed as common land and works are ongoing, which has brought commoners together but has been difficult to get it into Glastir. Could there be more money for access and more of a focus or flexibility to help commoners?

JT said that comments like this as a LAF should be fed into the review of the scheme through consultation, however payments are unlikely to change.

Regarding the commons comment, there was a GT commons scheme with a requirement that 80% of people with registered rights had to agree to come into the scheme and agree to an association so payments weren't made to commoners but to an association.

Kevin Slattery stated that landowners in general are positive and try to do best they can. This topic also holds relevance with the volunteering presentation, in that thousands give their time. In fact, 15 million people volunteer once a month and 20 million once a year.

Kevin asked if there is a figure of what is paid to Landowners per kilometre of right of way.

JT answered that landowners have to ensure they are not blocking rights of way but schemes do not pay for PROW. All payments are on website, where the breakdown for permissive access can be found.

Tom Woodall asked about the review of maps. JT advised that in August, once all updates are received, Jane sends them to the cartographic unit and anything from LAF goes to local Glastir Advanced team. Digital maps are updated when updates are received.

Max Grant asked how LAFs can access the routes submitted. CDs were sent out a number of years ago but the local authorities no longer have them. Also, how can the general public find what access is available through Glastir?

JT said that prior to NRW, all Tir Gofal access was shown on CCW maps. Since creation of NRW, Lle was developed as an IT source for this. Details can be found here: <http://lle.gov.wales/home>

Permissive access way markers are also given to landowners to signpost the permissive routes off a public RoW on the ground.

MG asked JT to send the current criteria for permissive access. JT stated it is down to LAF to highlight locally important routes as criticism was received under Tir Gofal from the Ramblers Association and British Horse Society as to how WG officers know where the routes should be.

JT will forward anything of relevance to the LAF.

Martyn Holland asked about the Rural Inspectorate Wales. JT said there are many layers of inspections, which sit within the rural payments division. There are teams in Llandudno, Caernarfon, Newtown and Llandrindod Wells.

GB thanked JT for her time and for giving the LAF an insight into Glastir Advanced.

Update from the LAF Chair's meeting

Gwen Butler gave an update from the LAF Chair's meeting held in December. The meeting was not representative in gender as Gwen was the only female apart from NRW staff! Twelve LAFs were represented and they worked through the notes of the north and south meetings of chairs and secretaries. The meetings didn't go as well as expected and it was proposed that a national conference and a separate secretary's workshop may be more beneficial.

Items discussed included:

- Glastir and Glastir Woodland schemes.
- NRW went through their response to the Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable use of Natural Resources paper in detail as CEDLAF did at the September meeting.
- A potential merger of the Wrexham and Flintshire LAFs was mentioned, but Flintshire had not been formally approached.
- Attendees were asked to support Anglesey LAF in their opposition of Wylfa Newydd and the new powerlines which will create a new and bigger set of pylons to bring these cables along.
- Pembrokeshire LAF have had success in having public rights of way on and near sites to be shown on planning applications.

Reports were submitted by LAFs, some were pessimistic. The main detail was the potential merger between Wrexham and Flintshire Forums. Our update was not included. It appeared Powys LAF is having difficulties

Jane Tibbott asked if anything was raised for her to action. GB replied that Evelyn Over attended and mentioned crossing open land and issues arising where planting on open access is occurring. There must be a gap, however no one at the meeting was sure how that would be policed. JT said it would be through the Rural Inspectorate.

GB said the other issue was how people found out about schemes. There is no advertising of schemes or permissive access on sites.

GB will circulate the notes of the Chair's meeting once approved. The next meeting will be held in Aberystwyth. They are trying to get a chief executive of a Local Authority as the speaker.

Volunteering – a presentation from The Outdoor Partnership by Paul Frost

Paul Frost, CED LAF member, offered to provide a presentation to the Forum at the June meeting following an agenda item about the RoWIP review. PF gave a background to The Outdoor Partnership (TOP) structure and highlighted that the presentation would concentrate on their volunteering programme. The volunteers in the programme are worth £1.6 million annually if that expertise was bought in.

The definition of a volunteer is someone who give 3 hours of their time per week. TOP has 850 volunteers spread across 100 clubs.

TOP is run by Simon Jones, based in Capel Curig. It is focused on North West Wales with a vision of recruitment, training, rewards, information gathering and tracking.

They use a pyramid system whereby volunteers are trained and then encouraged to recruit more volunteers, who are then trained and recruit more, and so on.

Recruitment

It is seldom that one form will suit all activities so recruitment forms are often individual to a project or activity. Recruitment is achieved through advertising online, posters at clubs and community buildings, and on social media.

Parents are often approached to make a contribution and not to use clubs as babysitting facility, but to get involved. Disclosure and barring searches are met through WCVS or directly through project funding. Many projects involve direct contact with children or vulnerable adults.

Training

There is a fine line between recruitment and putting people off. A structured training programme has been developed to let volunteers know what is expected of them, who they report to and what they will be doing. Health and safety and safeguarding training is often given, such as who to report to and carrying out risk assessments.

TOP try to link training to qualifications so volunteers come out with a recognised certificate or qualification to put on their CV. This shows commitment and professionalism for young people when going into work and applying for jobs. TOP then ask those qualified to give some time to the clubs.

A current project for women and girls is ongoing to get more into higher level sport. Mentors often provide their time free of charge.

TOP currently has 850 active volunteers, but 2,500 have been trained in the past 10 years. Often when a child leaves a club the parent help will be lost too, so the partnership are working on retention of volunteers. A volunteer of month scheme for example is a good incentive as is asking people to take on responsibility once trained, i.e. running a club or mentoring to develop skills.

Legal context.

Volunteers can claim expenses but cannot claim a fee.

A recent case in the news demonstrates the need for a volunteering structure. The case regarding a spectator fatality at a mountain bike event is seeking to prosecute the event organiser and a volunteer spectator.

Volunteers have a right to be protected. They must be trained properly, know what is expected of them, and who to report to if something goes wrong.

What about insurance? As long as volunteer context and contract are in place, premiums to insure volunteers are relatively low.

Funding

TOP have invested £700,000 over 10 years training volunteers. At an average £70,000 per year the return is 1:14 i.e. £14 value for each £1 spent on training. The Welsh Council for Voluntary Action are the main

providers of funding alongside Sport Wales and Community Chest, which is an excellent source of community funding, not fully subscribed this year.

What is a Typical Volunteering Programme structure?

Using a £500,000 lottery funded grant plus £2.6 million in partnership funding over 3 years, a programme providing outdoor opportunities for less engaged groups such as women and girls and disabled users was undertaken by TOP.

Using the pyramid structure, the aim was to recruit 36 volunteers to work with people with disabilities and women in year 1. The aim was then to retain 8 or 10 of the 36 who were then given volunteer recruitment training and then asked to each recruit 6 – 10 volunteers, resulting in 120 volunteers engaged in total in year 1. The same process is then repeated the next year, resulting in 380 trained volunteers in year 3. This is a sustainable model which does not necessarily need funding. The programme could potentially run itself.

Note: GB left the meeting at 11:55. HC arrived at 12:00

Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review Update

Conwy County Borough Council

Victoria Currie apologised for the delay in receipt of the RoWIP letter. All assessments have now been completed, once the manager has passed them these will be distributed to the LAF for the creation of a new RoWIP. The consultation period will begin in February and run for three months.

TW asked if the can LAF be involved in the review of last RoWIP or setting the strategic direction of the new one. VC responded that the assessments are carried out internally but the next stage will definitely require some input.

MG asked can the LAF get involved in review. VC stated that the review is more of an internal facts and figures exercise. The LAF will be invited to get involved in decisions for new RoWIP.

VC added that the current RoWIP funding has not been continued and VC’s head of service had retired. Paul Mitchell stated that NRW do not fund access maintenance because of statutory duty on Local Authorities, however the can fund other improvements.

PF added that it the outlook seems to be all doom and gloom and asked if there were options to work through community funds?

It was suggested that it would be useful for Gwen to send a letter to express the LAF’s concern at the loss of the RoWIP funding stream, that there is an expectation that funding will be available while the review is carried out and the new RoWIP is developed.

PF suggested copying the letter to NRW, Sport Wales and the Health department,

MG suggested it should be addressed to Hannah Blythyn, Assembly Member and cc other departments.

MG asked a further question to VC about the RoWIP review. He presumed money received through RoWIP will be included in review to show what has been delivered. VC confirmed it would.

Action Point 6.1	HA and GB to draft letter to Hannah Blythyn and other departments regarding the loss of RoWIP funding. HA to circulate draft to LAF.	
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Denbighshire County Council

HA gave update provided by Adrian Walls who wasn't able to attend the meeting. The letter and timetable has recently gone out to the consultee list and HA had circulated it to the LAF members.

AW has recently finished inputting the data from the 163km rights of way survey. Denbighshire Council will soon be having this data analysed both within the rights of way service as well as using the consultants Exegesis who provide the asset system. Their analysis will look at the nature and impact of issues on the network.

The next phase in the RoWIP review process will be consultation with path users, landholders and communities, this is likely to be done by consultation events and online questionnaires.

Feedback from the Local Authorities about Donate a Gate

Conwy County Borough Council

Sian Williams had produced a document of her own thoughts and questions to her line manager about the potential development of a scheme in Conwy following Kevin's presentation and discussions in the office. A bench scheme is currently offered in Conwy. In places benches are end-to-end and can detract from the environment.

Questions Sian asked include:

- Could CCBC ask for donations to provide other items such as picnic benches or gates?
- Does CCBC have enough memorial benches?
- Can gates and stiles be offered giving a wider variety of locations for memorials to be sited?
- Could a scheme help with budget cuts and how could it be achieved in Conwy?

SW highlighted that the National Park have had issues with unauthorised permanent and temporary memorials being placed on their sites.

SW added that the team on the Isle of Wight is a good contact and she wondered if and administer from the Ramblers Association would be a possibility in Conwy. Administration would be a big consideration in developing a scheme, especially as Conwy no longer have a rights of way department, who would collate information and decide on locations for furniture?

Other questions arise around locations, type of furniture, plaques, vandalism and promotion.

SW has a meeting with VC and Tom Gravett 24th January. Sian felt that developing a scheme would be a good thing if the administration could be worked out.

Denbighshire County Council

Hannah Arndt circulated Denbighshire Countryside Service's Memorials Policy and details of recent and ongoing projects in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, which have resulted from memorial donations. At present there is no formal scheme in place. Members of the public who would like to make a donation are referred to the conditions within the memorial policy and officers work with families to try and achieve something the family would like to remember their family member by and is in keeping with the policy. At present there are four ongoing projects resulting from donations. They include the purchase of ornamental trees for the garden at Plas Newydd, Llangollen and replacing a stile with a gate on Moel Famau.

The countryside service are not looking to introduce a donate-a-gate type scheme at present as the present approach is working, but it has not been ruled out for future development. HA is keen to learn the outcomes of Conwy’s meeting and how they propose to manage the administration of a scheme in particular.

Kevin Slattery said it is heart-warming that both Local Authorities are considering schemes. He went on to say that it doesn’t have to be a scheme for gates and it depends how proactive Local Authorities are in suggesting people direct donations towards something other than gates. Kevin added that people don’t always have to make a donation in memory of someone, donations can be made in celebration. Councillor Don Milne added that this approach adds a great link to ask people if they had considered a gate or other items.

Max Grant asked if the LAF could comment on outcome of the Conwy staff meeting. VC added that memorial page on Conwy’s website will be updated and she envisaged options to include benches, trees and gates.

Councillor Martyn Holland said this was a constructive way to deal with memorials and added that roadside memorials can be an issue. He also mentioned that DCC had to take steps to address cemetery adornments.

Paul Frost added that a certificate is very important.

Action Point 6.2	Local Authorities to feedback at next meeting with further suggestions about a scheme.	
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Date of forthcoming meetings:

- 8th March 2018
- 7th June 2018
- 6th September 2018
- 6th December 2018