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| **SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE CHAIRS OF THE LOCAL ACCESS FORUMS IN WALES** |

MEETING NOTES OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING HELD AT HAFOD A HENDRE, ROYAL WELSH SHOWGROUND, BUILTH WELLS, POWYS 19 FEBRUARY 2015.

Present:

Chair

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| Jean Rosenfeld | National Representative for the Local Access Forums in Wales & Chair of Flintshire LAF |

Members

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| Malcolm Wynstanley  Ian Mabberley | Arfon Dwyfor LAF  Chair Brecon Beacons LAF |
| William Lyndsay | Deputy Chair, Caerphilly LAF |
| Robin Simpson | Deputy Chair, Cardiff LAF |
| John Morgan  Dewi ap Rhobert | Chair, Ceredigion LAF  Chair, Isle of Anglesey LAF |
| Richard Davies | Chair, Monmouthshire LAF |
| Anne Underwood | Chair, Newport LAF |
| David Firth | Member, North Snowdonia LAF |
| Chris Ledbury | Deputy Chair, Powys LAF |
| Robin Simpson | Deputy Chair, Rhondda Cynon Taff |
| Edwin Gulliford | Chair, Torfaen LAF |
| Hedd Pugh | Chair, South Snowdonia LAF |
| Frank Coleman | Chair, Vale of Glamorgan LAF |
| Tim Stratton | Chair, Wrexham LAF |
|  | Dep. Chair, Wrexham LAF |

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| Guests & Event Support |  |
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| Jont Bulbeck, | NRW, Access Team Leader |
| Carys Drew | NRW, Recreation and Access Advisor (Secretariat) |
| Cymen | Translator |

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|  | **Review of LAF working practices:** Consideration of the Report and discussion of any next steps. Jean Rosenfeld and open discussion.  Jean Rosenfeld led an open discussion referring to the points in the two background reports *‘Submission to the Welsh Government by the ‘Meeting of Chairs of Welsh Local Access Forums’* and *‘Report on the Review of LAF Working Practices’*.  Discussion points included:  **Terms of LAF** – view that most LAFs are happy with the current terms. He noted the issue where some LAFs have a gap at the end of the 3 year term before a new LAF is set up, and gave an example that work to set up a new LAF should take place while the existing LAF was still in being, so that the time when there was no LAF in place was limited, in the case of Flintshire, to one week.  Points raised included:   * The difficulty of getting enough new members to join, * The effort needed to get a LAF together and to get the right balance * The importance to get a fair representation from across society, including gender and age range. * It was noted that there are differences in the way authorities decide on the membership when forming a new LAF; whether at officer level or authority committee.   Suggestions:   * To target interest groups and to advise them of the opportunity of LAF membership. * To pull together a list of national organisations which all LAFs could refer to. * To try and find at least 1 press opportunity and circulate the meeting minutes out to people, such as Community Councils and interest groups. * It was noted that observers can be invited, and new members can be co-opted and it was up to the Chair to oversee this. * That it was important that membership was decided from the authorities elected members and not just an individual officer. In Snowdonia a committee decides on appointment. * If struggling to get landowner representation – suggestion to contact farming unions who could ensure there was attendance and provide contacts to represent the interest rather than the unions. There were examples where LAFs had very good representation from landowner interest.   **LAF Roles**  Jean Rosenfeld outlined the existing role and noted that some LAFs had been interpreting their role quiet widely, e.g. considering the Active Travel Bill. LAFs may want to consider health and wellbeing as a driver for Recreation and Access and take a more holistic approach.  Points raised included:   * That no one in local authorities takes a holistic view of all the access related projects and that there was a need for this role and opportunity for LAFs to carry out this role * That CCW guidance suggested that LAFs could set their own agendas   Suggestions:   * That any organisation or individual receiving public money for access projects should have regard to LAF advice * That every authority should have an equalities officer, and that they could be approached to advise on membership and to provide information to LAFs on issues to consider * Given the limited time and means that LAFs have, they should focus on what delivers the most benefits drawing on the scope set out in legalisation of recreational access to the outdoors * LAFs can provide the link between health and recreational bodies * To find ways of having the LAF’s role recognised * That LAFs think about the scope of their remit and local conditions and think about the partners that they want to work with.   **LAF Secretary**  Jean Rosenfeld suggested that most Secretaries were performing well, time was a constraint, as the role formed part of an officer’s responsibilities.  Points raised included:   * Training for secretaries; there is a need for staff with sufficient support and training to fulfil the role of secretary * That staff who are the secretary and also the RoW manager/officer need to achieve a balance as there can be a conflict of interest and this can put those officers in a difficult position * That the legislation does not define who the secretary should be. * Junior staff can provide a scribe but then senior staff have wider skills and experience * Difficulty of getting senior officers e.g. Chief Executive to engage with LAF   Suggestions:   * It is helpful to have a senior level person in the role of secretary and that they have a good relationship with the Chair * To hold agenda pre-meetings as a way of supporting the secretary and to bring in other staff with technical advice * The LAF Chair should take on issues and write on behalf of the LAF where the Secretary could be put in a difficult position e.g. given dual role of secretary and RoW staff * To strike a balance between reliance on the secretary and being independent; LAFs should not just rely on the secretary * The Chair should approach Chief Executive and set up a regular meeting. When writing to the authority it should be addressed to the Chief Executive * Access officers in role of Secretary can be beneficial as they know their work and their contacts   **Chair’s role**  Points raised included:   * The need to learn from others, noting that all have different styles, and that the LAFs have differences from each other * Important to develop relationships as the LAF Chair * The different challenges faced by LAFs in rural and urban areas, where access is given higher priority in rural areas   Suggestions:   * That the Chairs meeting should include invitation for Deputy to observe, the learning curve for new Chairs is tremendous and having experience of Chairs meeting and to hear issues would help * The importance of having good succession planning * That items at the LAF Conference involve other LAF roles   **Sub-committees**  Points raised included:   * That LAF members should consider the need to contribute between meetings such as through subcommittees, this could be difficult for younger members with more commitments   Suggestions:   * Very good idea to have subcommittee to draw on local interests * To hold standing sub committees to deal with regular or ongoing issues * That it is good to get members involved in something else, outside of the standard LAF meetings e.g. dealing with area specific issues or responding to particular developments e.g. M4 corridor development, Glastir permissive access * That all LAFs should set up subcommittees as needed, it was agreed that these were a good way of working * To hold a workshop for the whole LAF to brainstorm issues, and it was useful to involve the whole LAF and work in a different way to regular meetings   **Proactive/Reactive working**  Points raised included:   * It was dangerous to spend too much time on responding to consultations * Examples of projects in which LAFs were instrumental in getting progress   Suggestions:   * To find new ways of working and working with different people e.g. trying to get tourism people involved, working with community councils, informing health awareness e.g. through GPs regarding the benefits of recreation * To establish contact with neighbouring LAFs to talk about cross border issues * To invite speakers from other organisations to meetings as a proactive way of trying to increase dialogues and build relationships * That it is important to respond to consultations * The need to explore the use of volunteers by local authorities * That LAFs have a role to play in initiating ideas and putting forward new ways of thinking.   **Publicity**  Points raised included:   * That LAFs are not widely publicised and that there was a need for members and their appointing authorities to do more * The need to have a way of highlighting examples and encouraging people to read information   Suggestions:   * There are a number of opportunities for publicity that need to be explored: * Local authority website – LAF page * LAF Annual report – there is a legal minimum, but the suggestion that LAFs should write their own reports (rather than the authority) and that this should be in a user friendly /publicity format * Responding e.g. in press, to current or contentious issues to raise awareness of the LAF and its role * How best to engage with local press   **Training**  Points raised included:   * It was noted that the previous National Representative had produced training for LAF members   **Monitoring Success/Impact**  Points raised included:   * Whether LAFs were monitoring their impact and the difficulty of doing this * Noted the difficulty some LAFs have in getting information from their authority   Suggestions:   * That the LAF Annual Reports should include points on what has been achieved and progress made by LAFs * Consider how to deal with uncooperative staff/authority * Invite feedback from the authority e.g. quiet word with rights of way officer about whether the LAF is useful * That the relationship with the authority would be effective if the authority is just supporting the LAF because they have to * LAF to reflect themselves, on whether they are effective, useful or what more the LAF could do * Offer presentations about the LAFs to e.g. other organisations, senior authority staff, and community councils.     **NRW support**  Points raised included:   * Jean Rosenfeld felt there was a good relationship with NRW providing national support * Noting the difficulty of one person attending to represent NRW which now had a wider remit, and the result that they were unable to deal with all questions at the time, and needed to go back to consult relevant colleagues * Noted that additional support such as attendance at each meeting was provided by CCW when LAFs were formed for the very first time * NRW were unable to attend every LAF, but would do so if requested for specific items where input was needed. If there were specific questions it would be helpful to provide these to the NRW representative in advance   Suggestions:   * That regular briefings from NRW e.g. by email would be helpful * That it wasn’t necessary to have NRW attendance at every meeting but to provide an opportunity for NRW representative to contribute if they did attend   **Community Councils**  Points raised included:   * The challenge of developing links with Community Councils, with one example of a LAF presentation being offered but there had been little/no uptake   Suggestions:   * Noting that ROWIPs would need to be reviewed, this was a good opportunity for the LAF to raise awareness of the LAF and the ROWIP and opportunity for people to contribute to the revision of the plans. * There was a lot of scope for engaging with Community Councils particularly given their powers in relation to rights of way * Given the reductions in local authority budgets Community Councils may become more involved in rights of way management   **Action 16.1: All:** to submit any comments on the Chairs Submission to Welsh Government to Carys Drew who will pass them on to the authors (John Morgan/Jean Rosenfeld)  **Action 16.2: All:** anyone interested in forming a subgroup to consider examples of best practice. Put names forward to Carys Drew.  **Action 16.3: Subgroup:** to consider current examples of best practice amongst LAFs (based on the issues highlighted in the two background papers: *Submission to the Welsh Government by the ‘Meeting of Chairs of Welsh Local Access Forums’* and *‘Report on the Review of LAF Working Practices’*) and draw up a code of practice. To include:   * Attracting new members: points around recruiting new members (list of national organisations who should be included in trawl for new members) * Maintaining balance of membership * Annual reports: making the most of this report and the opportunity to highlight the work of LAF and raise profile. * Collate information regarding managing and maximising publicity and raising the profile of LAFs. * Look at the role of Community Councils   **Action 16.4: All**: Every LAF should issue an annual report and circulate widely. Include questions about how much influence or impact the LAF feels or can demonstrate it is having. All Annual reports produced should be provide to NRW (to Carys Drew by email)  **Action 16.5: Carys Drew:** to issue reminder to all LAFs of the requirement to produce an annual report.  **Action 16.6: All:** Each LAF to think about the scope of their remit and local conditions and think about the partners that they want to work with.  **Action 16.7: All:** Each LAF to use subgroups as needed as a proactive way of working between main meetings.  **Action 16.8: Carys Drew:** to obtain copy of LAF Chairs training module for new members and forward to Wrexham LAF. |
|  | **Update on the NRW Recreation and Access Enabling Plan (previously referred to as Strategy)** Jont Bulbeck, NRW  Jont Bulbeck gave an overview of progress on NRW’s Outdoor Recreation and Access Enabling Plan which will enable NRW to implement its wider strategies.    The Enabling Plan had been consulted on including through a workshop at the LAF Conference, and Jont thanked LAFs for contributing to this.    Engagement with communities was important and there was a focus on delivering the benefits of access and recreation.  **Action 16.9: All** to circulate the NRW Recreation and Access Enabling Plan to LAF members.  **Discussion:**  John Morgan asked whether NRW were confident of the resources to deliver the Enabling Plan  Jont Bulbeck responded that delivery would be with existing resources. At the top level, NRW was committed to deliver the Plan and the broad strategic priorities. Some elements were aspirational but NRW would seek to deliver across all the areas of action. |
|  | **Welsh Government and NRW Funding Programmes**  **ROWIP Funding Programme:** Report and Results of the funding in 2013/14: Carys Drew, NRW  Carys Drew provided an overview of the most recent reports on the work being delivered under the RFP. The reports had been circulated prior to the meeting and were available. The reports on the work delivered in 2014/15 would be available in due course.  NRW had been asked to provide WG advice on the ROWIP Guidance. ROWIPs were due for renewal after 10 years, whilst authorities wouldn’t be starting from scratch they would need to look at their assessments and revisit their actions.  Jean Rosenfeld suggested that authorities should need to look at what they didn’t do the first time round.  Jont Bulbeck noted that there was a role for LAFs both to work with authorities and to be a scrutiny body.  **Wales Coast Path:** Update on the current situation: Jont Bulbeck, NRW  Jont Bulbeck noted that since the launch of the Wales Coast Path (WCP), Welsh Government (WG) had provided funding over the last two years and had asked NRW to provide advice on future management. This advice sets out aims, objectives, costs for management, marketing and promotion and NRW involvement. The advice had been provided to WG and a decision was expected in February. Subject to the decision, the WCP would be managed in line with National Trails in terms of having dedicated officers for sections of the route. Considerations included which organisation would host the WCP officers. New funding arrangements would begin from April 2015 and funding would be allocated on a formula basis for this year.  **Discussion:**  Jean Rosenfeld asked whether the funding would include links and making repairs to areas damaged by storms.  Jont Bulbeck responded that the main focus of advice related to the upkeep of the main route, links were likely to be subject to additional bids and there would be some opportunity for this. The issue of storm damage had been raised in discussions with WG, and NRW would want to be able to go back to WG in such exceptional circumstances.  Dewi ap Rhobert had been asked to raise the issue for the need to strengthen compulsory purchase legislation on behalf of Anglesey LAF. Where there were large landowners currently refusing to allow the WCP route to be located on their land and another area where a big problem had arisen with the need to purchase land to move the route of the WCP after a landslide.  Jont Bulbeck responded that he would expect to take these issues forward as part of the Programme. The legal processes are in place, but they are not straightforward. Local authorities have powers but there is a cost to the public purse. There was a possibility that the Green Paper may suggest a change to the legislative process.   * **Splash:** Update on funding for water related recreation: Jont Bulbeck, NRW   The Splash Programme was a competitive programme previously run by Environment Agency Wales, it had been in abeyance for 2014/15. WG had asked NRW to review the Programme, and NRW were waiting for a response from WG further to this advice.  **Discussion:**  Jean Rosenfeld asked whether the Splash Programme was considered useful.  Jont Bulbeck responded that the Evaluation had shown that it was beneficial, and going forward would wish to look at developing reporting on the outputs and outcomes achieved.  A show of hands indicated that around half of LAFs have a member with interests in water recreation.  Points were made about voluntary access arrangements on water and that these had been a failure. Conflict with regards to access to water was increasing.  Jont Bulbeck recognised that access arrangements were mixed in terms of outcomes and that attempts to develop new access had been difficult. |
|  | **Lunch** |
| 4. | **Contributions from All**   * An opportunity to share highlights from your written update on your LAF   All Chairs were asked to provide a ½ page update from their LAF on timely issues or examples of working which others might find helpful, this was collated and circulated prior to the meeting as ‘Contributions from all’ in addition, the following points were made:   * Chris Ledbury noted that the Powys LAF was responding to an appeal and advice for Dog Walkers. * Malcolm Wynstanley, the Arfon Dwyfor secretary was retiring * Dewi ap Rhobert said that Anglesey LAF was looking at planning issues related to energy development on Anglesey * Caerphilly LAF was working on Glastir and reflecting on it’s potential to be a useful resource * Hedd Pugh, Snowdownia South LAF was looking at Dog Walking, cross compliance, wild camping and illegal off-roading, * Jean Rosenfeld, Flintshire LAF had looked at the CROW mapping/remapping process, and access to water with a presentation from a canoeist * David Firth reflected on two successes North Snowdonia LAF had been involved with relating to long standing issues. Lon Gwyrfai (started 20 years ago), a new section had been opened which was proving to be extremely successful and waymarking on Snowdon to try to get people to stay on their intended route and he hoped that the waymarks were vandal proof. * Frank Coleman, suggested using the email group for the Chairs meeting as a way of networking. * Paxton Hood-Williams, Swansea had now got a LAF with a good mix and balance. LAF was looking at s106 agreements in relation to a large development. * Ian Mabberley noted that National Park staff may no longer be available at weekends to manage visitors. The issue was the increasing desire to encourage people into and promote the outdoors and then not having people around to manage the visitors arriving. There was ongoing concern about illegal off roading.   Jont Bulbeck responded that there was a cross party group on off-roading which he had been invited to address. It was difficult to get an objective view of the problem in certain areas. If LAFs have an interest then gather some objective view of what is happening, how frequently instances are occurring, there are figures from 2007. LAFs are major instigators in helping to build up a picture of the issue. There is anecdotal evidence that the problem is growing such as evidence from landowners of damage to property. |
| 5. | **NRW Update**  Carys Drew read an update from Rachel Parry about the Promote routes project.  Whilst awaiting an internal decision on the visual identity for the project NRW (with the Steering and Working Groups) would develop other aspects of the work:   * Revisit collating an initial pilot tranche of candidate trails from all those on the Steering group and working groups * Devise a template to make it easier for partners to provide consistent route information * Draft a partnership agreement for maintenance of route standards * Continue to explore possible arrangements and funding for website and promotion |
| 6. | **WG Update**  **WG had provided a written update for the meeting:**   * **ROWIP Funding** WG hoping to get funding pot of the same value as 2014/15 (£1million). It looks promising but had yet to be signed off by the Minister.   ***Post meeting note:*** *The Minister confirmed that**£1million was available for ROWIP implementation in 2015/16 and NRW has issued offer letters to the authorities involved.*   * **Green Paper** the draft Green Paper was due to be shared with the Minister by the end of the following week, however there was no timetable for public consultation but they were confident that there would be Green Paper consultation. |
| 7. | **Note and Actions of last meeting** |
| 8. | **Round up of the day** Jean Rosenfeld, LAF National Representative |
| 9. | **Date of next meeting** Carys Drew, NRW  **Action 16.10: All** to consider and propose topics for inclusion in the LAF Conference agenda  **Action 16.11: Jean Rosenfeld:** to invite the Minister to attend the Conference. |