



Monmouthshire  
Local Access Forum  
Annual Report  
19/20



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

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# Version Control

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| <b>Title</b>          | Monmouthshire Local Access Forum Annual Report  |
| <b>Purpose</b>        | Annual Report 19/20   |
| <b>Owner</b>          | Local Access Forum  |
| <b>Approved by</b>    | LAF 20 January 2020 - Due to Covid 19 preventing meetings of the newly appointed LAF published by the Appointing Authority without the forward plan |
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Published in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001 by the Appointing Authority, Monmouthshire County Council, on behalf of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum.

## Chairman's Foreword

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This Report covers the third and final year of the current Forum to 25 January 2020.

I am the elected Chair and my Deputy is Irene Brookes. Our Secretary is Matthew Lewis, Environment and Culture Manager, MonLife and meetings are attended by Ruth Rourke, Countryside Access Manager, Paul Keeble, Group Engineer Highways and Flood Management and Alan Clarke the Minute Secretary.

Details of our workload for the year are set out in the Review below. We have spent considerable time this year debating and commenting on a variety of issues including the Rights of Way Improvement Plan review and the response to Welsh Government's consultation paper. Irene and I have also worked closely with the National Representative for Welsh LAFs attending the National Chairs meeting and the National LAF Conference.

I also very much appreciate the contribution made by all the members who have a wide range of knowledge and experience.

Anne Underwood

## Secretary's Report

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This report marks the completion of the third year of the current LAF from its first meeting on 25 January 2017. The forum has continued to operate below the statutory minimum during the year. However the forum's has continued to contribute to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, including considering the responses to public consultation and the proposed final plan.

The more formal approach to the LAF agenda's, reports and meetings has continued this year and has been successful in focussing the LAF activities. Workload pressures within the appointing authority has meant the LAF has met on three occasions during the year.

During the past year the forum met on 10 July 2019 in Usk, 19 November 2019 in Monmouth and 22 January 2020 in Usk also in Monmouth.

The LAF members continue to contribute to the resolution and development of countryside access issues and policy in Monmouthshire.

We are very grateful for their voluntary input and for the experience and advice they provide and their commitment to the work of the forum.

Matthew Lewis, Secretary

# The Year reviewed

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These are some of the issues where the LAF have advised and been consulted:-

## 1. RoWIP Review

The forum has considered the RoWIP Review, including the pre-consultation draft in July and the results of the public consultations in November 2019 and January 2020, and the proposed post consultation draft of the Countryside Access (Rights of Way) Improvement Plan in January 2020, prior to its proposed consideration by the Council's cabinet in February 2020.

Implementation of the new RoWIP including the preparation of a RoWIP delivery plan is likely to continue to be the main focus of the LAF's work over the coming year. The LAF Secretary and the Countryside Access Manager will ensure the LAF is appropriately briefed and involved.

## 2. Consultations

The LAF has responded to consultations on the Brecon Beacons RoWIP, the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and a proposed road traffic order on Glynwood Road (Cross Farm to Fair oak) Tintern.

We have received updates from the Chair and Vice Chair and the Countryside Access Manager from the LAF Chairs joint meetings, including on the progress of Welsh Government's proposed legislative changes.

## 3. Projects and funding

We have received updates on the options for a new delivery mode, now established as MonLife, for the future delivery of Tourism, Leisure, Cultural & Youth Services, including countryside services, countryside access sites and rights of way.

We have received updates on various externally funded programmes and projects and the recruitment of the new LAF.

We have also received an update on progress on the Lower Wye Valley Catchments Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management Project, a joint MCC and Wye Valley AONB project supported by grant aid from Natural Resources Wales.

## Work Carried Out in 2019/20

| No | Item  | On Draft Plan or Additional | When Done                    |
|----|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
|    | <b>Membership</b>   |                             |                              |
| 1. |   |                             |                              |
|    | <b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review</b>  |                             |                              |
| 2  | ROWIP Review: Pre-consultation Draft  | Yes                         | 10 July 2019                 |
|    | Rights of Way Improvement Plan Review Consultation Responses  | Yes                         | 19 Nov 2019                  |
|    | Countryside Access (Rights of Way) Improvement Plan Review: Public consultation responses and post consultation draft | Yes                         | 22 Jan 2020                  |
|    | <b>Consultations</b>  |                             |                              |
| 3. | Brecon Beacons ROWIP  | Yes                         | 10 July 2019                 |
|    | Proposed Road Traffic Order: Glynwood Road (Cross Farm to Fair oak) Tintern   | Yes                         | 10 July 2019;<br>19 Nov 2019 |
|    | Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2020 – 2025   | Yes                         | 22 Jan 2020                  |
|    | <b>Special Projects</b>   |                             |                              |
| 4. | Proposed new delivery model for Tourism, Leisure, Culture & Youth Services / MonLife                                  | Yes                         | 10 July 2019;<br>19 Nov 2019 |
|    | Lower Wye Valley Catchments Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management Project                                 | Yes                         | 19 Nov 2019                  |

## Future Work Programme

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The forum's future work programme will be considered by the new LAF (Covid 19 has prevented the new LAF from meeting at the time of writing)

## Role of the Forum

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The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities and National Parks, to establish Local Access Forums (LAFs). These forums advise Natural Resources Wales (NRW), local authorities and National Park authorities on ways in which local access can be improved.

The statutory purpose of LAFs is to advise on the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area in which they are established. LAF's must have regard to the needs of land management, natural beauty, flora, fauna, and geological and physiographical features.

The following bodies must have regard to any relevant advice given by the LAF: National Park authority, the highway authority, Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and, for matters relating to defence or security, the Secretary of State.

The forums must have a balance between:

- Users of access land and local rights of way; and
- Landowners and occupiers of access land and land with rights of way.

People with other interests especially relevant to the area will also be represented.

The Regulations specify there should be between 12 and 22 members, including the Chair and the Deputy. In addition the Chair may invite other individuals and organisations to observe and give advice.

Members are appointed by the Appointing Authority the local Highway Authority or National Park Authority. Monmouthshire County Council is the appointing authority for the Monmouthshire LAF which covers the administrative County of Monmouthshire outside the boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It includes the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Beauty within the county.

Within the area there are Registered Commons and 1657 Kilometres of registered Public Rights of Way. There is in addition a substantial length of County Unclassified Roads, the responsibility of the Highway Section, many of which are un-surfaced.

Monmouthshire County Council and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority have a Delegated Responsibility Agreement covering most aspects of the management of Public Rights of Way within the National Park.

## Contacts

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Monmouthshire LAF Secretary

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More details on the Monmouthshire LAF are available at  
<https://www.monlife.co.uk/outdoor/countryside-access/monmouthshire-local-access-forum-laf/>

This includes link to the LAF agendas, reports and minutes on the Council's meetings calendar under the appropriate dates <http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/home/local-democracy-and-councillors/council-meetings> If not available please contact the Secretary.



# Appendix 1: Forum Membership

## a) 2017/20 Membership (to 25 January 2020)

| NAME                           | INTERESTS  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Irene BROOKE<br>(Deputy Chair) | Farmer with local business and tourism interests. Enthusiastic walker in Monmouthshire and other areas of UK. Dog walker, horse rider and photographer. Flora and fauna of Angiddy Valley. Member of CLA, NFU and Monmouthshire Meadows Group.   |
| Anthea FAIREY                  | Chair of Friends of Castle Meadows, Abergavenny which works together with Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) to encourage access for all into the Meadows and to encourage various groups and individuals to participate in the enhancement and conservation of this unique habitat.   |
| Sheila HAMPSHIRE               | I am keen to promote safe and responsible access for walkers, horse riders and where appropriate bikes, with the interests of all parties at heart. I have knowledge of the local area having lived here for 40 years and enjoyed walks and horse riding myself, as well as having a keen interest in the needs of wildlife.   |
| Gwyneth JONES                  | As an explorer (albeit close to home) I have an interest in signage and information, along with an appreciation of the work that goes into producing it. My family connections and business interests give me some insight into the pleasures and frustrations of various forms of off-road motorcycling; trials, enduro, motocross, etc. where access is frequently a vexed issue.                            |
| Philip MUNDELL                 | I have been a volunteer with Monmouthshire County Council Countryside section for the past nine years. I am particularly proud of my involvement with the Fit4Life scheme and was part of the team that initiated both the Abergavenny and Chepstow groups. I am now an active member of the Chepstow team. I have recently agreed to take on the role of Path Care Officer with Chepstow Walkers are Welcome. |
| David SMITH                    | Since my retirement, I have been a rights of way volunteer in the Monmouthshire countryside service. This has involved repairing and maintaining public rights of way, as well as undertaking periodic path condition surveys. I lead guided walks in the Monmouthshire walking programme and help with activities such as "Moths and Bats Evenings".  |
| Mark STOREY                    | Local resident, living in the Wye Valley AONB.<br>Walker cyclist and climber (BMC member).<br>Some familiarity with local rights of way issues and some understanding of the CROW act.   |
| Anne UNDERWOOD<br>(Chair)      | A horse rider for most of my life, a volunteer with the British Horse Society to promote and improve access provision for equestrians. A keen walker and explorer of the countryside. Local history, health promotion, yoga.   |
| Ann WEBB                       | Councillor for Tintern. Appointed as the County Council's representative.  |

In addition, Sylvia Fowles has been a regular observer since July 2017.

## b) 2020/23 Membership

| NAME             | INTERESTS   |
|------------------|---|
| Irene BROOKE     | Farmer with local business and tourism interests. Enthusiastic walker in Monmouthshire and other areas of UK. Dog walker, horse rider and photographer. Flora and fauna of Angiddy Valley. Member of CLA, NFU and Monmouthshire Meadows Group.  |
| Anthea FAIREY    | Chair of Friends of Castle Meadows, Abergavenny which works together with Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) to encourage access for all into the Meadows and to encourage various groups and individuals to participate in the enhancement and conservation of this unique habitat.  |
| Sylvia FOWLES    | Smallholder in Monmouthshire for over 40 years. Safe and responsible accessibility for all, especially equestrian and disabled access. Interests in conservation, wildlife, care and maintenance of the countryside, land management and local history. Volunteer with the British Horse Society promoting equestrian access network, and Riding for the Disabled Association. Member of Monmouthshire Antiquarians, Local History Group and Monmouthshire Meadows Group. |
| Sheila HAMPSHIRE | I am keen to promote safe and responsible access for walkers, horse riders and where appropriate bikes, with the interests of all parties at heart. I have knowledge of the local area having lived here for 40 years and enjoyed walks and horse riding myself, as well as having a keen interest in the needs of wildlife.  |
| Philip MUNDELL   | I have been a volunteer with Monmouthshire County Council Countryside section for the past nine years. I am particularly proud of my involvement with the Fit4Life scheme and was part of the team that initiated both the Abergavenny and Chepstow groups. I am now an active member of the Chepstow team. I have recently agreed to take on the role of Path Care Officer with Chepstow Walkers are Welcome.  |
| David SMITH      | Since my retirement, I have been a rights of way volunteer in the Monmouthshire countryside service. This has involved repairing and maintaining public rights of way, as well as undertaking periodic path condition surveys. I lead guided walks in the Monmouthshire walking programme and help with activities such as "Moths and Bats Evenings".   |
| Mark STOREY      | Local resident, living in the Wye Valley AONB.<br>Walker cyclist and climber (BMC member).<br>Some familiarity with local rights of way issues and some understanding of the CROW act.  |
| Anne UNDERWOOD   | A horse rider for most of my life, a volunteer with the British Horse Society to promote and improve access provision for equestrians. A keen walker and explorer of the countryside. Local history, health promotion, yoga.  |
|                  | <i>[Additional members to be added when confirmed]</i>  |
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| Ann WEBB         | Councillor for Tintern. Appointed as the County Council's representative.   |

## Appendix 2: Future Work Programme

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*[To be revised / added after consideration by the new LAF]*

| <b>Item</b>                 | <b>Background</b>  | <b>Reporting Arrangements</b>    |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Standard Items:</b>      |  |                                  |
| <i>Performance Measures</i> | <i>MonLife Delivery Plan performance measures of CAMS issues (all issues &amp; High priority issues) Available quarterly</i> | <i>Regular report to LAF</i>     |
| <i>Funding</i>              | <i>Progress on and opportunities for external funded &amp; MCC capital funded countryside access projects programmes</i>     | <i>Regular report to LAF</i>     |
| <i>Consultations</i>        | <i>LAF Consultations</i>   | <i>Report to LAF as required</i> |
| <b>Working Groups:</b>      |  |                                  |
| <i>To be determined</i>     |  | <i>Report to LAF as required</i> |
| <b>Work Programme Items</b> |  |                                  |
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