



Guidance For Prospective Monmouthshire Local Access Forum Members

Introduction

Monmouthshire County Council is recruiting new members for the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum. The Local Access Forum (LAF) advises the Council, Natural Resources Wales, and others on ways to improve public rights of way and green spaces in Monmouthshire.

These are voluntary positions to advise on countryside access issues and help support improvements to local access.

We are looking for members with a wide variety of interests and expertise so the new forum can help support improving countryside access for all users and making the public rights of way network more sustainable in the long term.

We want the new forum to reflect the widest range of interests. So, you could be a countryside and outdoor access user, a landowner or manager, a community or access volunteer, local tourism operator or involved in promoting and supporting countryside access for wellbeing and health. If you are willing to share your expertise and participate in the local access forum for the next three years, we would love to hear from you.

Although members are appointed on a personal basis, according to their knowledge, skills and experience of access to the countryside, we are particularly interested to hear from prospective members who have good and active connections with relevant local organisations, partnerships and interest groups.

The forum looks to maintain a balance of interests including landowners and land managers, all types of access users and those representing other interests, such as health, access for all and conservation.

Background

The forum is part of the requirements of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 to advise the Council, Natural Resources Wales, and other bodies on the improvement of public access for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and to advise and assist with the implementation of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan. These bodies must, by law, have regard to relevant advice given by the forum.

It consists of between 12 and 22 members. Members are appointed for a 3-year period. The forum normally meets quarterly. The forum must meet at least twice a year; however it normally meets quarterly.

Areas of Work

The LAF advise on all aspects of countryside access, including public rights of way and the right of access to open country and registered common land. The forum needs to consider all forms of access including walking, horse riding, cycling and motorised use. The forum's agenda is set by the members, in agreement with the local authority.

In the last three years the forum has:

- Assisted with the completion and delivery of the Countryside Access (Rights of Way) Improvement Plan (ROWIP)
- Commented on various statutory or other consultations, including active travel mapping and on Welsh Government policy proposals
- Considered and advised on improvements to rights of way in the area
- Helped inform partnership projects and programmes to improve and widen countryside access and volunteering / community involvement

There are certain issues upon which a Local Access Forum must, by statute, be consulted on, mainly concerning open access land and the development, review and implementation of the [Countryside Access \(Rights of Way\) Improvement Plan](#).

Copies of the Forum's agendas and minutes can be found at: [Committee details - Local Access Forum \(monmouthshire.gov.uk\)](#) and the forum's annual reports are at <https://www.monlife.co.uk/outdoor/countryside-access/>

Roles and Responsibilities

Local Access Forum Member's roles and responsibilities: -

- To be representative of users of access land, or rights of way, owners or occupiers of land, or other related interests especially relevant to Monmouthshire.
- Be committed to the positive function of the forum, engaging in constructive and open dialogue by providing a pragmatic and informed view
- Be willing to provide a link and a communication channel between the forum and relevant national and local organisations, partnerships, and interest groups.
- Be willing to pursue opportunities to publicise the work of the forum, including representing the forum at public events / meetings and liaising with relevant national and local organisations.
- Be willing to serve on the forum for 3 years from the first meeting.
- Be expected to attend as many meetings as possible but must attend at least one meeting year, otherwise their membership may terminate

(Deputies are not allowed except as observers at the discretion of the Chairman).

It is desirable that a LAF member will:

- Have good and active connections with relevant local organisations, partnerships, and interest groups and able to advise on their views and disseminate the LAF's work.
- Have relevant local experience of access issues
- Have experience of working on, and contributing to, similar forums or working groups
- Reside in or be particularly familiar with / have any other interests especially relevant to the area of the forum (Monmouthshire, excluding Bannau Brycheiniog National Park which has its own Local Access Forum).

The Council will: -

- Provide a venue for meetings of the Local Access Forum.
- Provide a secretariat and ongoing support and advice to the forum.
- Reimburse forum members for reasonable expenses incurred through direct membership of the forum
- Relay the advice given by the forum to the relevant cabinet member / decision makers within the authority at appropriate times.
- Promote the work of the forum including preparing an annual report of the forum's activities.

In selecting new membership of the forum the Council is required to ensure a reasonable balance between the interests of all countryside access and land owners / managers, and as far as possible between persons of different genders, races, ages, disabilities, and other characteristics.

The selection process will involve a short interview with a panel of three elected member who will advise the appointing authority (a full meeting of the County Council).

If you wish to be considered for membership please complete the enclosed application form and return by **15 January 2024** to

countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk or to

MonLife Countryside Access,
Monmouthshire County Council,
County Hall
The Rhadyr Usk
NP15 1GA