Lower Wye Tracks and Trails Steering Group Meeting – 11th February 2025

A sub-group of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum [LAF]

Notes of hybrid meeting held at Wye Valley National Landscape Office & on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Barbara Heys [LAF] (Chair)

Irene Brooke [LAF]

Anne Underwood [LAF]

Kelvin Varney [LAF]

Graham Kinsella [MCC Highways]

Gareth Freeman [MCC Highways]

Ruth Rourke [MCC Countryside Access Manager]

Celyn Davies [Wye Valley National Landscape team]

Andrew Blake [Wye Valley National Landscape Manager]

Apologies:

John Askew [LAF]

Ian Mawdsley [LAF / Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group]

Terence Mead [LAF]

Rhys Wynne-Jones [LAF]

Sallie Roderick [LAF]

2. Confirm Notes from Last Meeting – 3rd December

No comments

3. Signage Update

- Working with GLASS on Tread Lightly signs, incorporating MCC and Wye Valley National Landscape logos
- Aiming ultimately for a comprehensive suite of signs for UCRs, public rights of way and permissive paths, but focus initially on the 2 priority/target areas around Tintern & Whitebrook

- Will need to get Welsh Government permission via MCC Highways for signs on UCRs
- Installation logistics and regulations to be considered (e.g. existing posts, permissions)
- Audit of existing signage and required locations is required and may be included within the unsealed UCR audit around Tintern and Whitebrook

4. Audit Tender Update

- Earth Science Partnership (ESP) confirmed to conduct the audit, covering all necessary expertise (ecology, geotechnical engineering, drainage)
- Survey will cover 11km of unsealed, unclassified roads around Tintern and Whitebrook
- Timeline: work will commence within 4 weeks of instruction, fieldwork will take about 1 week and upon completion the report will be available within 4 weeks

5. Monitoring Users

- Discussed Yorkshire Dales National Park's approach using vehicle monitors and complaint registers since 2002
- Explored various monitoring technologies: acoustic, electro-magnetic, pressure pads, thermal sensors
- Discussed challenges of distinguishing between different types of vehicles (e.g. bicycles vs. motorbikes, electric vs. petrol)
- Cost and maintenance considerations for different monitoring systems discussed
- Further investigations will be made

6. Coal Lane, Devauden

- Agreed this was not the forum to address the status of this route. But recognised the general principle of need for clarity in public information

Following on from the topic of Coal Lane:

- Discussed the need to maintain accurate and accessible data about the status of PROW and other Highways
- Discussed creation of an information resource (potentially a flow chart) to guide public on trail status and issue reporting
- Any illegal activity should be reported to Police and incident number obtained, to buildup their records. But identified challenges in distinguishing between legal and illegal trail use, and therefore appropriate reporting channels
- A new all-Wales digital mapping system for rights of way is in development, which could significantly improve public access to trail information
- Need further exploration of complain logging systems to track issues over time

- Discussed need for better coordination between Community Councils, Police, Highways and Rights of Way department

7. Gwent Police – Operation Harley

- Attempts made to engage with Gwent Police about Operation Harley, but no response yet
- Discussed importance of accurate reporting and logging of incidents to justify police operations
- Celyn to query what records the Police hold and check original Tracks & Trails consultation to see if they have already supplied this data
- Need for better public understanding of when and how to involve police in trail-related issues
- Intend to get better engagement with Police but recognise their resources are stretched

8. Next Steps

- Schedule site visit to Whitebrook in March
- Compile information for a public guidance resource on reporting issues/incidents (possibly as a flow chart)
- Contact Gwent Police re Operation Harley and explore possibility of obtaining complaint records for the local area
- Prepare update on Tracks and Trails project for upcoming LAF meeting (19th February)
- Contact ESP for CVs of staff members doing survey work

9. Any Other Business

No comments

10. Date of Next Meeting

Coordinate with chair on available dates, then set up poll for next meeting date in early May.