

Lower Wye Tracks and Trails Steering Group

Notes of the meeting at 2pm on 8th October 2024

Hybrid at Wye Valley National Landscape Office, Monmouth & MS Teams

Attendees

Sallie Roderick – Monmouthshire LAF

Terence Mead – Monmouthshire LAF

Rhys Wynne-Jones – Monmouthshire LAF [online]

Kelvin Varney – Monmouthshire LAF

Irene Brooke – Monmouthshire LAF

Anne Underwood – Monmouthshire LAF

Ian Mawdsley – Monmouthshire LAF / Chair of Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group [online]

Andrew Blake – Wye Valley National Landscape (interim chair)

Celyn Davies - Wye Valley National Landscape

Ruth Rourke – MonLife, Monmouthshire County Council [online]

Ruth Waycott - Wye Valley National Landscape [online]

Apologies

Graham Kinsella - Monmouthshire County Council

Meeting Purpose

To discuss and plan initial actions for implementing the Lower Wye Tracks and Trails Strategy in the Monmouthshire part of the Wye Valley National Landscape.

Key Takeaways

- The group will focus on two initial projects: improving signage and conducting route surveys.
- Signage efforts will target high-conflict areas like Tintern and Whitebrook to clarify legal usage.
- Surveys will assess route conditions, surrounding landscape features, and maintenance needs.
- A site visit is planned for 21st November to view issues first-hand and test potential survey methods.
- Education and behaviour change efforts are needed but are a longer-term goal.

Discussion

Group Structure and Governance

- The group is a subcommittee of the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum (LAF) and will report to the LAF, the Wye Valley National landscape Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), and Wye Valley Villages Delivery Group.
- Terms of reference were reviewed and amended to include quarterly meetings and additional members (Highways officer, Natural Resources Wales).
- Requests for chair was made; further discussion will be had with LAF members to fill role.

Priority Projects

- Signage improvements:
 - Focus on clarifying legal usage rights in high-conflict areas
 - Work with Highways and Rights of Way teams on appropriate signage
 - Consider educational/behavioural messaging
 - Proper signage enables enforcement actions
- Route surveys:
 - Assess physical conditions, maintenance needs, adjacent and surrounding landscape features
 - Scope and test survey methods/technology (e.g. CAMS system)
 - Potentially use volunteers to help conduct surveys
 - Data will inform future improvement projects and funding bids
- Consider trial focusing on key areas like Tintern and Whitebrook, rather than whole National Landscape

Accessibility Improvements

- Discussed potential projects like improving wheelchair access at Whitestone and on the North Footpath
- Agreed accessibility is important but not the immediate/highest priority
- Need to balance with other user needs and route suitability

Behaviour and Conflict Issues

- Illegal/inappropriate use of routes, especially by motorized vehicles, is a major concern
- Education and outreach needed, especially for visitors from outside area
- Police involvement may be required for enforcement
- Proper signage is first step to enable both understanding and enforcement

Next Steps

- Organize site visit to Tintern area on 21st November
- Research signage options and requirements for target/trial areas
- Investigate route survey methods and criteria
- Schedule next formal meeting for 3rd December
- Reach out to potential chair candidates from LAF
- Planning underway for 50th anniversary of Wye Valley Walk in 2025