Tracks and Trails Steering Group Meeting – 23rd February 2026

Attending:
Members:

Barbara Heys (chair)
Anne Underwood
Ian Mawdsley [online]
Kelvin Varney
Sallie Roderick
Irene Brooke

Officers:

Colette Bosley
Ruth Rourke
Carl Touhig
Richard Ray
Andrew Blake
Celyn Davies
Graham Kinsella [online]

Apologies:

John Askew
Terence Mead

Key Takeaways

- **Legal Advice:** Written legal advice requested from Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) on UCR status. This will help ensure understanding by members and public.
- **Four Priority UCRs:** The group will focus on four UCRs in the Whitebrook/Tintern area from the ESP report to create a manageable starting point.
- **Signage:** Trial of designed UCR signs to progress, paired with a public engagement campaign to explain the rationale (enforcement) and manage community concerns.
- **December Workshop Notes:** The notes will be reworded to reflect discussion, after concerns that they implied group-wide agreement on specific actions.

Legal Status of UCRs & Appendix E

MCC advised that a UCR's presence on the "list of streets" implies a presumption of public carriageway rights for all vehicles. Some members suggested MPV rights are not automatic and must be proven for each route. Further clarity was sought before the public release of Appendix E.

- **Path Forward:**
    - MCC will clarify their position with Welsh Government.
    - If resources become available for a records officer, MCC highways will investigate the legal history of the priority UCRs to identify the original decision to classify them as carriageways.

Prioritizing UCRs for Action

Celyn presented a condition-based priority list, using the ESP consultancy report. The group agreed that any future references to routes should include their street/trail numbers to avoid confusion where local names are used.

The group discussed when to intervene on routes, i.e. before they become unsalvageable, like the Grove Road (Horse Way) in Whitebrook, which is now probably too costly to repair.

- **Main simplified options considered:**
    - Repair and maintain. Limited by MCC's budget constraints.
    - Do nothing. Risks ongoing deterioration and community complaints.
    - Implement a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to restrict vehicle access, to varying categories &/or directions. This requires a robust, evidence-based process to avoid legal challenge. Subsequent enforcement may still be an issue.
- **Decision:** The group selected four priority UCRs to focus on, based on the ESP report and community feedback.
    - **Routes:** The three highest-priority routes from the ESP report, plus Tintern Road.
    - **Rationale:** To create a manageable scope for initial action and build momentum.
- **Next Step:** Celyn will circulate a matrix for members to populate with data (e.g. impact on Wye Valley National Landscape, usage, incidents, etc.) to contribute to evidence base for each priority route.

Signage Strategy

- **Purpose:** To provide clear information for users on UCR status, which is a prerequisite for police enforcement against illegal off-road use.

There were a range of views. Signs are considered a necessary first step for enforcement and to provide clarity. Concern were expressed that Signs might attract more motor vehicle use on routes residents want restricted and could be seen as a waste of money.

- **Decision:** Proceed with a trial of the designed UCR signs on the four priority routes.
    - **Rationale:** To gather evidence on their impact and enable enforcement.
    - **Mitigation:** The trial will be paired with a public engagement campaign to explain the rationale and manage community expectations.

Public Engagement & Communications

- A public meeting is overdue to inform residents and gather evidence. The meeting will be held after the group has a clear plan for the four priority routes.
- A 'UCR Hub' on the Wye Valley National Landscape website could be created to provide information and a FAQ. This could also include a reporting framework to help residents and users to report issues relating to the UCRs and Public Rights of Way.
- The group requested anonymized data on resident reports to MCC Highways to quantify the scale of the problem.

Next Steps

- **Barbara Heys:** Contact Richard Garner to request that the most recent LAF meeting minutes be circulated (in draft version) as soon as possible.
- **Wye Valley National Landscape partnership:**
    - Revise the December workshop notes to clarify they reflect discussion, not 'agreement'.
    - Draft a response to the TUCC letter for group review.
    - Circulate Celyn's presentation and a prioritization matrix for members to populate.
    - Develop a plan for the signage trial and public engagement campaign.
    - Schedule the next meeting for **Wednesday, April 15th at 10:00 AM.**
    - Progress public engagement and plan a public meeting.
- **MCC Legal:** Provide written advice on the legal status of UCRs, the process of making a TRO and different restriction options. Liaise with Welsh Government to clarify their position regarding Appendix E.
- **MCC Highways:** If resources become available for a records officer, highways will investigate the legal history of the four priority UCRs to find the original decision to classify them as carriageways.