

**NAWFED CYFARFOD CADEIRYDDION FFORYMAU MYNEDIAD LLEOL
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NINTH MEETING OF THE CHAIRS OF THE LOCAL ACCESS FORUMS IN
WALES**

MEETING NOTES OF THE NINTH MEETING HELD AT HAFOD A HENDRE,
ROYAL WELSH SHOWGROUND, BUILTH WELLS ON 15TH FEBRUARY 2011

Present:

Chair

Jean Rosenfeld

National Representative for the Local
Access Forums in Wales & Chair of
Flintshire LAF

Members

Vincent Mears

Chair, Arfon Dwyfor LAF

John Evans

Chair, Brecon Beacons National Park LAF

Rowland Pittard

Dep. Chair, Bridgend LAF

Mike Johnson

Chair, Caerphilly LAF

Robert Derbyshire

Chair, Cardiff LAF

Geoffrey Williams

Chair, Carmarthenshire LAF

David Owen

Chair, Ceredigion LAF

Max Grant

Chair, Conwy East LAF

Edwina Hart

Dep. Chair, Denbighshire LAF

Dewi ap Rhobert

Chair, Isle of Anglesey LAF

John Harvey

Chair, Monmouthshire LAF

Tony White

Member, Neath Port Talbot LAF

Carl Close

Member, Newport LAF

Richard Frame

Member, Newport LAF

Ken Owen

Chair, North Snowdonia LAF

Sue Enfield

Chair, Pembrokeshire LAF

Charles de Winton

Chair, Powys LAF

Mike Scott Archer

Dep. Chair Powys LAF

Steve Carter

Chair, Rhondda Cynon Taff LAF

Alun Edwards

Dep. Chair, South Snowdonia LAF

Andrew Morgan

Member, Swansea LAF

Edwin Gulliford

Chair, Torfaen LAF

Frank Coleman

Chair, Vale of Glamorgan LAF

Sue Gittins

Dep. Chair, Wrexham LAF

Guests

Daniel Thomas

WAG

Quentin Grimley

CCW

Jont Bulbeck
Andrew Fleming

CCW
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Event Support

Lucy Swannell
Carolyn Hockedy
Dafydd M Jones

CCW, Access Policy Officer (Secretariat)
CCW, Events Manager
Translator

INTRODUCTION & OUTLINE OF THE DAY

Jean Rosenfeld welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited new attendees introduced themselves to the group.

Jean Rosenfeld then updated the group on action points from the last meeting, one action remains outstanding:

8.2 Lucy Swannell (CCW) to assist by distributing feedback from Bob Derbyshire to the LAFs – This meeting has been postponed twice and is now scheduled for the 17th of March.

Vincent Mears, referring to the railway crossings consultation, felt that his LAF were fortunate to have a secretary involved with tourist railways as the consultation was extremely complicated and the timescale was very limited.

Geoffrey Williams mentioned that Network Rail have fenced off access to a suspension bridge in Llandeilo because they want to fence off access to the railway track itself for health and safety reasons.

John Harvey said that some crossings are only available to use on a permissive basis and that work was being done by Gloucestershire County Council to standardise their railway crossings so that users know what to expect.

Jean Rosenfeld recommended that individual LAFs deal with changes to railway crossings on a case by case basis.

1. UPDATE FROM WAG

WALKING & CYCLING STRATEGY

Daniel Thomas from WAG gave a presentation on the Walking & Cycling Strategy (appendix 1) which was launched in 2009 and continues until 2013. The strategy aims to get more people walking and cycling more often. Daniel outlined the 5 core objectives of the strategy which are to improve health, improve the local environment, encourage sustainable travel, increase levels of walking and cycling and finally to ensure that these activities are prioritised in cross cutting policies, guidance and funding.

Reports will be produced every year to monitor the strategy and the next one is due to be published this summer. Daniel went through the annual report for 2009/2010

highlighting the key initiatives which included Cardiff becoming the first Sustainable Travel Centre, Safe Routes in Communities, Change 4 Life, Coastal Access Improvement Programme, Walking & Cycling Conference, Bike It, Cycle Training and Bike Week.

Discussion

Edwina Hart said that Denbighshire LAF were proposing using existing bridleways that are 2m wide to develop new cycle ways and that routes should be able to be used by both cyclists and horse riders.

Jean Rosenfeld said that where it was possible to Flintshire had developed bridleways along their coastal cycle route but it's not always possible to get a surface that's suitable for both horses and bicycles.

Vincent Mears commented that creation of new bridleways is legally complicated and therefore costly for cash strapped local authorities and that maintaining existing bridleways to a good standard was difficult to achieve.

Daniel Thomas referred to a new multi use section of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path that included both horse riding and cycling but acknowledged that generally it's difficult to get a surface that is suitable for both.

Dewi ap Robert brought attention to the cycling initiative that has been around for a long time in Anglesey where the focus is on nurturing interest in cycling amongst the young and improving the health of the community. Because of increased traffic Dewi highlighted the importance of having safe cycling routes and was of cycle paths around Caernarfon but said there needed to be more in other areas. Dewi asked Daniel if he was aware how many local authorities had schemes that promoted cycling.

Daniel responded that an education committee within WAG were looking at promoting cycling and that Bike It initiatives were being run in Conwy and Neath Port Talbot. Other authorities may have promoted cycling as part of Change 4 Life and Safe Routes in Communities projects but an exact figure is not known. Daniel agreed that raising young people's confidence to use bikes was key and would like to see initiatives that promoted cycling in every local authority.

Rowland Pittard pointed out that funding to develop cycleways often comes from the local authority's transport grant but LAFs are not involved in discussions about how transport grants are spent in the same way that they are involved in the ROWIP funding programme.

Jean Rosenfeld said that Flintshire LAF involve themselves by inviting an appropriate transport officer to their meetings.

Sue Gittins commented that the document concentrated too much on cycling and that more funding should be available for the walking community.

Daniel Thomas responded that he had focused on the cycling initiatives in particular as the Wales Coast Path and ROWIP funding were being covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Edwin Gulliford enquired whether disabled access was included in the strategy.

Daniel Thomas replied that the Minister had recently opened a section of the Wales Coast Path at Porthcawl that was fully accessible for less mobile and disabled users and that a section of the WCP in Ceredigion had been designed so that powered wheelchairs were able to use it. He added that providing access for different types of user is a balancing act but that WAG were keen to ensure that as many people as possible are able to use routes.

Steve Carter envisaged how conflict of interest could arise between motorised wheelchairs, horse riders and cyclists.

David Owen didn't think it was possible for feet, wheels and horses to live together amicably or maintain a balance without costs getting out of hand. He referred to the cycle trail between Aberaeron and Llanerchaeron where pillars in the middle of the track to deter motorbikes also make access for the disabled difficult.

Sue Enfield referred to a multi use path that runs from Wiseman's Bridge to the Ironworks in Stepside, Pembrokeshire which has been transformed from a muddy bridleway into a well designed, fibre deck surfaced path enjoyed by cyclists, walkers, horse riders and the less mobile. The works were funded by WAG's Rural Development Plan fund, Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and Sustrans.

Edwina Hart said that old railway tracks that are at least 5 metres wide can be used to create restricted byways that are multi user routes in the truest sense.

Jean Rosenfeld summed up the discussion by concluding that if routes are well designed then multi user routes can be created but this isn't possible in all cases.

GLASTIR

Daniel Thomas informed the meeting that Ann Humble's last briefing was generally up to date. LAFs will be asked later on the year to consider access opportunities to woodland and that they would be fully briefed nearer the time.

Jont Bulbeck added that he had attended a Glastir meeting the previous day and understood that Glastir staff would consult LAFs in September and October regarding access aspirations in their areas. He also noted that this now included the woodland element of Glastir and that WAG would like LAFs to therefore include access aspirations to private woodland as part of their considerations. LAFS would have two months to respond to the consultation.

Discussion

Jean Rosenfeld asked whether LAFs should identify a list of woodlands without knowing whether that particular woodland was going to be included in a Glastir application.

Jont Bulbeck confirmed yes that was the case, that it was an aspirational assessment at the moment and understood that consideration should be given to all woodlands that were either part of farms and/or woodland only owners as these are the ones that would be eligible to apply. Land owned by the Forestry Commission will not be part of the Glastir scheme.

Rowland Pittard added that it would be helpful to know which woodlands were available to consider enhanced access opportunities.

Max Grant hoped that the brief would include details on how the LAFs should map opportunities in woodland as the original consultation on access was carried out differently by each LAF.

Jean Rosenfeld described how a planning officer in Flintshire had assisted the LAF by formatting sketches on an OS map into a format that could fit directly onto WAG's software. He suggested that the Glastir team could summarise the procedure they had agreed with Flintshire LAF so they could ask other LAFs to do the same but acknowledged that availability of local authority staff may differ.

Geoffrey Williams asked whether the Chairs should send a memo to planning officers encouraging them to assist LAFs during consultations.

Jont Bulbeck encouraged each LAF to raise the matter directly with their local authority as a positive way of strengthening working relationships.

Vincent Mears wanted to register how appalling he thought the first access consultation had been handled and was disappointed that nobody from Glastir had been to talk to Arfon & Dwyfor LAF. He felt that responsibility for good mapping during the next consultation should be Glastir's.

Charles de Winton referred to a Powys LAF member who felt that Tir Gofal was too short term and poorly targeted but that Glastir shouldn't run into the same problems because it will link to the existing public right of way network.

Edwina Hart felt as LAF member that she didn't understand Glastir and how it affects the farming community and thought it would be useful to ask a representative from a landowning organisation to visit their LAF to explain the reasons why a farmer would want to join Glastir.

Geoffrey Williams said that a booklet is available on Glastir but also added that the large amount of detailed information was confusing.

Alun Edwards shared his view as a farmer and explained that he wanted to be in Glastir because it pays for outputs that don't have a market value such as hedge

planting. Alun added that farmers can only join Glastir for 5 years and that upland farmers feel forced into joining the scheme because other payments have been taken away. Alun said that he had created permissive access under Tir Gofal which led from rights of way to access land to give him an opportunity to talk to access users. The money allowed him to improve access infrastructure and signage and this meant there were no problems with gates being left open.

Daniel Thomas asked all members to be aware that WAG as an organisation had reduced in staff numbers significantly with 400 leaving before Christmas 2010 and another 400 leaving this March.

Action: 1.1 Jont Bulbeck to talk to Ann Humble about how WAG will provide information on woodlands to LAFs and request that it be provided before September so that LAFs can do some preliminary work before an official consultation begins.

Action 1.2 Jont Bulbeck to provide a briefing for the LAF Chairs on the latest Glastir developments.

2.WALES COAST PATH

Quentin Grimley gave a presentation on the latest developments regarding the Wales Coast Path (WCP) (appendix 2) which will be opened in May 2012, an exact date hasn't been identified yet. The WCP is being developed to National Trail standards but it's uncertain whether it will become a National Trail in the future. The WCP will link in with Offa's Dyke, Glyndwr's Way and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Trails.

As the main focus of the Coastal Access Improvement Programme is on delivery of the WCP itself, the ROWIP funding formula has been amended so that ROWIP funding can now be used to improve access in the 2km coastal zone.

The secondary focus is on developing information and marketing for the WCP and a contractor will soon be employed to take a lead on this work.

A third key objective is getting in place appropriate arrangements for long term management of the path as there is no funding in place beyond 2013. A Wales Coast Path Partnership group has been set up to try and resolve these issues and they meet for the first time in March.

Branding has been produced and is already in place along sections in Conwy, Denbighshire & Swansea.

A series of maps were shown which showed progress on the WCP so far. A lot of the path is already in place and although not all of it is on the ideal line, alternative routes will be available in the vast majority of places. Quentin explained the issues involved where gaps still existed or alternative routes were being used:

Flintshire - Dee estuary – no public access to a section of the coastline owned by the RSPB because of concerns about the impact on the birds. WCP also has to avoid an Eon Power Station because of their concerns about security.

Conwy - Penmaenmawr – a bridge is needed to cross the railways line, the works needed are in existing Sustrans and WAG plans.

Anglesey – Vast majority of coast is in place however landowners of large coastal estates are strongly opposed to access. Minister has written to the chief executive of Anglesey council to discuss progress. Alternative routes are being put in place and some users don't mind the odd detour inland.

Gwynedd – similar issues to Anglesey as far as large estates are concerned at Penrhyn Estate. Concerns about the impact on birds south of Dinas Dinlle means that access will be allowed on a temporary basis initially and if there is no adverse effect on the birds the access will be made permanent.

Ceredigion – Dyfi crossing – Network Rail won't allow a footbridge to be attached to the existing railway crossing at Dyfi Junction so the WCP will detour inland cross the Dyfi at Machynlleth. There are ongoing landowner objections at Cardigan Island Farm Park. Although a footpath creation order has gone through it hasn't been implemented because of legal challenges.

Carmarthenshire – WCP has to negotiate many rivers. Landowner negotiations are in progress but as this is a slow process alternative routes have been identified.

Port Talbot – industrial use of the coast means the WCP follows existing cycle ways and pavements. Neath Port Talbot authority are developing a high level alternative on the inland side of the M4 which will offer coastal views in a quieter setting.

Vale of Glamorgan – a lot of the existing access is de facto – however it is anticipated that PROW and permissive agreements will be agreed in the near future.

Cardiff to the border – much of the section of coast between Cardiff and Chepstow is undergoing an appropriate assessment as it is an important habitat for birdlife and the conservation value is recognised at a European level. CCW conservation staff and the RSPB have concerns about the proposed WCP route and the possible effect on the birds. At Newport the transporter bridge can be used when available.

Quentin ended by emphasising that the vast majority of the WCP was already in place and of a high standard and that progress was definitely positive when bearing in mind that a National Trail typically takes 15 years to develop.

Discussion

Jean Rosenfeld asked whether this group had anybody representing the 3rd sector on the Wales Coast Path Partnership.

Quentin Grimley responded that the group membership was currently aimed at local politicians and chief executives of local and national park authorities but hoped that in time membership would be extended to other groups.

Daniel Thomas mentioned that there was also a coastal access stakeholders group.

Jean Rosenfeld said he hadn't been invited to sit on the stakeholder's group but thought the LAF Chairs should be represented.

Edwina Hart asked how much of the Anglesey Coast Path was permissive.

Quentin said that some of the original Anglesey Coast Path was permissive but a lot of work is being done to make appropriate sections Public Rights of Way.

Richard Frame expressed concern that due to reorganisation at Newport County Council the Wales Coast Path officer post is being lost and the responsibilities being transferred to an already full time officer with the Countryside Section.

Vincent Mears asked Quentin if he could clarify whether the route between Pwllheli and Abererch would be along the main road because there is no formal route along the beach and high tides can make it unavailable.

Quentin replies that as far as he was aware there was no intention of having the main road as the WCP route.

Vincent Mears emphasised the need for future management and commented that on Pen Llyn the focus on the WCP and staff shortages in Gwynedd meant inland paths were becoming unusable.

John Harvey thought the partnership between Cardiff, Monmouthshire & Newport had worked very well and was concerned that Newport no longer wanted to be a part of it and that as a result there might not be a link on the ground between Cardiff and Newport.

Quentin Grimley said that Newport had applied for funding to do grant projects on the WCP in the next two financial years.

Frank Coleman said that Vale of Glamorgan didn't have a full time coastal access project officer but did get assistance from Trish Cottnam, coastal access officer in Cardiff, one day a week. He added that most access in the Vale of Glamorgan was de facto with gaps where the cliffs have been eroded. He was optimistic that it should be in place by 2012 but as a lot of creation orders are needed the time factor could make it unachievable.

Tony White said that he walked the coast east of Newport and that his presence wasn't objected to although the maintenance of the sea bank, if it did become the WCP, could be expensive.

Quentin Grimley commented that some of this section already has public rights of way along it and that most of it was managed by the Environment Agency.

John Harvey thought that the current sea bank needed to be a metre higher to provide an effective defence against flooding.

Andrew Morgan asked if the salary for coast path officers was ring fenced.

Quentin Grimley replied that CCW funded 75% of eligible staff costs.

Robert Derbyshire expressed concern that once their coast path officer leaves there will be no-one in place to push issues forward.

Andrew Morgan said it was important that all the LAFs should lobby their local authorities after 2013 to keep pushing for the desired line and to keep the political will in place so that developing the WCP to a high standard doesn't fall by the wayside.

Jean Rosenfeld added that in Flintshire they were already lobbying their local authority hard to maintain the WCP.

3. ROWIP FUNDING

Jean Rosenfeld referred to a spreadsheet which showed funding allocations for next year for each local authority (appendix 3).

Vincent Mears said that LAFs in Gwynedd were concerned that there was no commitment in place to fund ROWIP work beyond 2011/12 as it provides a useful means of getting rights of way work done in times of cuts.

Max Grant said that the local authority in Conwy have given the LAF assurance that funding for rights of way work won't decrease next year.

Jean Rosenfeld added that the local authority in Flintshire had also identified access work as a future priority.

Carl Close commented that the amount allocated for Newport next year was disappointing and that it was more important than ever that LAFs were aware of what's happening in terms of funding.

Geoffrey Williams said that in Carmarthenshire the local authority is very effective at securing other sources of funding.

Frank Coleman said that the local authority in the Vale of Glamorgan are using Rural Development Plan funding. The local authority had to produce a business plan of which countryside access is a part and the funding runs until 2013.

Jont Bulbeck added that Offa's Dyke National Trail had been successful in securing RDP funding to fund the improvement of interpretation along Offa's Dyke so there are opportunities available to use RDP funding to improve countryside access.

Mike Scott Archer said that he'd seen a press headline citing that 4 million pounds was available to improve tourism in Powys and thought that countryside access should receive a percentage as it is why many tourists visit Powys.

Andrew Morgan said that LAFs should encourage their local authority to engage with local volunteer groups to carry out simple tasks such as vegetation cutting but also to give them training so that they can carry out a wider variety of tasks.

Jean Rosenfeld said that volunteers still need professionally trained staff to work with them.

Vincent Mears said that Gwynedd hadn't utilised volunteers in the past but a lack of resources mean they are re-evaluating their approach. Gwynedd are also trying to get community councils to be more pro-active. He added that securing other sources of funding can take up a lot of officer time because of the complex bureaucracy involved.

Geoffrey Williams gave more information about how Carmarthenshire use international volunteer work camps to carry out access work. The local authority have also written a work programme for local Rambler's groups and that strict rules exist regarding communication but adequate supervision can be an issue.

Action 3.1: All LAFs to make their local authorities aware of RDP funding as an opportunity to fund countryside access work.

4. FEEDBACK ON LAF CHAIRS MANIFESTO

Jean Rosenfeld updated everyone on the responses received to the LAF Chairs Manifesto (appendix 4). The Manifesto was sent to all Assembly Members of which about 30 acknowledged receipt and supported the manifesto's principles. It was also sent to all 4 political parties and each one acknowledged receipt and expressed support.

A letter had also been received from Jane Davidson stating that she thought the WCP was an important tourism asset and was very supportive of the principles.

Jean had suggested at the National Access Forum meeting in November 2010 that the NAF also support it but it wasn't appropriate for the NAF to do this as a single body as some representatives are funded by WAG and therefore unable to engage in direct lobbying.

Max Grant confirmed that Ramblers Cymru had written to the 4 main political parties to endorse the LAF Chairs' Manifesto.

Vincent Mears said that the Welsh Sports Association also has a manifesto and that they claim to be the sole body representing outdoor activities in Wales. Vincent thought that they should made aware of the LAF Chairs manifesto as there may be opportunities for future joint working.

Jont Bulbeck updated the group on the Splash fund run by Environment Agency Wales which can be used to improve access to and on water and funding will be continuing in 2011/2012 financial year at a similar level to this year.

John Harvey asked whether present Splash officers would remain in post.

Jont Bulbeck said that if a decision had already been made regarding this he didn't have anything to add to it.

Action 4.1: Jean Rosenfeld to investigate how the WSA can be contacted and make them aware of the LAF Chairs' Manifesto.

5. COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (CAMS)

Jean Rosenfeld described how CAMS was used by Flintshire by the ROWIP team and maintenance officers to prioritise work and maintain a record of the network. When CAMS was introduced a full survey was carried out and the aim is to link the information on CAMS to the interactive mapping which the public can use on the authority's website. This would allow the public to see the status of routes and leave feedback which in turn would improve productivity and the ability to respond to complaints. Improved information has led to better budget maintenance.

Geoffrey Williams reported that information on CAMS would be available to the public in Carmarthenshire at the end of 2011. Having CAMS allowed rangers to get up to date information on their area including complaints and plan site visits more effectively.

Mike Johnson reported that Caerphilly were still inputting information about their network onto CAMS.

Many of the LAF representatives present were unaware of CAMs and Jean Rosenfeld explained that all local authorities and although it was mainly used by planning teams some rights of way departments had been utilising it.

Andrew Morgan said that although Swansea use CAMS he didn't envisage it being made available to the public because of the cuts although it would be useful if LAF members could have access to their LAF's CAM information.

Jean Rosenfeld added that this already happened in Flintshire.

Sue Enfield reported that Pembrokeshire County Council use CAMS to manage the network and that Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority use CAMS to manage the coast path.

Vincent Mears said that having 3 versions of the definitive map in Gwynedd made it difficult for the authority to implement CAMS fully.

Geoffrey Williams asked whether B&B owners for example could print maps from CAMS for guests.

Jean Rosenfeld said that copyright would need to be considered as information can be made available but rules are stricter regarding copying.

Vincent Mears said that a charge is raised for information given by planning departments.

Andrew Morgan commented that local authorities were able to waive copyright.

Jont Bulbeck added that although authorities and other organisations are allowed to waive copyright for definitive map purposes, provision for publicity or promotion would be likely to mean bypassing the sale of OS maps to the public and would therefore be against the rules.

Carl Close had not heard of CAMS and didn't think it was being utilised within Newport. He urged all LAFs to urge their authorities to start using CAMS where they weren't already doing so.

Frank Coleman said that the Vale of Glamorgan recognise the value of having CAMS and are in the process of carrying out a 100% survey.

Edwin Gulliford reported that CAMS is used by the tourism department in Torfaen but the rights of way department aren't using it.

Andrew Fleming praised CAMS highly as it could record lots of information very easily and this could then be made available publicly via the web.

John Harvey said it was important that CAMS was updated regularly as it would only be as good as the information held on it.

Jont Bulbeck said that CCW funded the use of CAMS on National Trails and was generally beneficial.

Action 5.1 All LAFs to encourage their local authorities to use CAMS to help prioritise works.

6. DOG FOULING ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Dewi ap Rhobert introduced the topic by reporting that a lot of the local access forum members in Anglesey have identified problems with dog mess and that farmers especially are concerned about the health problems it can cause for livestock and people. Even where signs existed they were ignored even on public beaches in the summer where people with dogs could be fined. People with dogs needed to take more responsibility as paths are being mistreated and a national campaign was needed to draw attention to the problem. Dewi ended by asking if there was anything the Chairs could do to try and tackle the problem.

John Evans reported that their forum faces similar issues to Anglesey.

Geoffrey Williams said that Carmarthenshire had introduced dog control orders. He added that removing faeces from the surface of a field could still cause problems as worms could have moved into the soil underneath.

Vincent Mears said that the Countryside Code gave general advice to dog users but emphasised that not all the blame should be put at the dog walkers' door as problems involving worms could be confined to farms. Vincent agreed that an overall education programme about dogs in the countryside was needed.

Jont Bulbeck referred to the advisory booklets that were produced when open access was launched and the one entitled 'You and Your Dog In The Countryside' had been distributed widely to vets and dogs homes. Jont added that community councils could use legislation to install dog poo bins and make bylaws. The issue had been discussed at the National Access Forum but existing legislation doesn't provide answers to the problem in the short term. Education and implementation at a local level can provide solutions in the long term.

Mike Scott Archer suggested having reminders included on existing rights of way signage as a way of reducing the scale of the problem.

Edwina Hart said that the bags users use to collect their dog waste should be biodegradable as they are often left in situ. She added that it was difficult to find places on Anglesey to exercise a dog away from the public.

Jean Rosenfeld said that people should always take their dog waste home and thought that getting the message into existing programmes would be better than starting from scratch and had seen one of the presenters on Countryfile picking up their dog's waste.

Vincent Mears added that most councils will collect biodegradable waste as part of their waste collection.

Edwin Gulliford said it was important to remember that most dog walkers do the right thing and that solutions which involved enforcement would only be effective if there was someone there to do enforcement work.

Jean Rosenfeld referred to the presentation given by The Kennel Club last year which made it clear that only a tiny percentage of dog walkers do the wrong thing.

Steve Carter said that a huge amount of money was spent on the issue now but this money would be difficult to come by in future and questioned where the funding for new enforcement and education work would come from.

Dewi ap Rhoberts said that some people keep dogs who don't really want them and as a result don't walk them enough or clear up after them. In the past a license was needed to keep dog and Dewi asked whether this should be brought back as a way of making owning a dog a bigger decision.

Ken Owen said that farmers have a duty to keep records about worming their dogs and this should be extended to the general public but acknowledged that this would be

difficult to police. He added that bins provided for dog waste in Beddgelert were used by the public to dispose of general litter.

Dewi ap Rhobert proposed that the LAF Chairs write as a group to Welsh local authorities to raise the issue so that they can give advice to community councils and even if it didn't solve the problem it might help improve the situation in some places.

John Evans seconded the proposal that the group write to the local authorities as a network of LAF Chairs.

Richard Frame suggested sending the letter to CADW also.

Action 6.1 Lucy Swannell to send the National Access Forum statement on dogs on dogs in the countryside to Jean Rosenfeld.

Action 6.2 Dewi ap Rhobert to write a draft letter to local authorities emphasising the health issues and asking local authorities to work with community councils to try and address the issue.

Action 6.3 Jean Rosenfeld to circulate draft and send finalised version to the local authorities.

7. TOPICS FOR THE LAF CONFERENCE 7TH JUNE 2011

Possible topics for the conference were discussed by the Chairs and the following suggestions were agreed to be the most relevant and interesting:

ROWIPs - review of funding and progress to date
Access to Inland Water
Effective Use of Volunteers
CAMS system
Glastir – enhancing local access element within the targeted scheme
Future funding
Rural Tourism Inquiry
Byways Open to all Traffic (BOATS)
Review of LAF's effectiveness and relations with their Local Authority

Action 7.1 Richard Frame to provide contact details of officer in Newport County Council who uses volunteers very effectively to see if he would be happy to speak about his work at the Conference.

Action 7.2 Lucy Swannell and Jean Rosenfeld to narrow down and further develop topic subjects and how they could be presented.

Action 7.3 Lucy Swannell to check whether the results of the Rural Tourism Inquiry have been published and forward round to the group.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Edwina Hart raised concerns that there were plans to merge Denbighshire and Conwy LAFs and asked whether this was allowed under the CROW Act. She added that it had been presented to Denbighshire LAF as a done deal.

Quentin Grimley said that it was possible to merge LAFs as long as an area is still being covered by a LAF.

Max Grant added that talks had begun between the two local authorities to look at merging the highways departments so it looks likely that the LAFs will also be merged. When it was proposed at a meeting of Conwy East LAF the members didn't want to merge with another LAF.

Geoffrey Williams said that some smaller LAFs had already merged for example in the Brecon Beacons and Powys.

Quentin added that Conwy West came under the LAF for Snowdonia North so there was scope to change boundaries of LAFs as long as this doesn't create a gap.

David Owen asked whether the Chairs meeting should consider how money that isn't being drawn down through Glastir could be utilised to improve the accessibility of access land and suggested that landowners of access land could be paid to keep paths open.

Alun Edwards said that Glastir funding that isn't used will stay in the Rural Development Fund.

Jont Bulbeck said current EU rules meant it was not possible to pay landowners for statutory access and that compliance with statutory duties is a requirement for payment for the All Wales Element of Glastir but acknowledged there could be scope for enhancing the access element of the targeted scheme.

David Owen announced that this was the last meeting as his term as Chair of Ceredigion LAF was drawing to a close and thanked the meeting.

John Evans announced that he would be retiring soon so this was also his last meeting.

Round up of the day and next meeting date

Jean Rosenfeld thanked everyone for attending and contributing and gave the date of the next meetings.

LAF Conference – Tuesday 7th June 2011, Internation Pavilion, RWAS Showground, Builth Wells

Thursday 13th October 2011, venue tbc

Finally Jean Rosenfeld presented a card and gift on behalf of the LAF Chairs to Carolyn Hockedy, CCW Events Manager who is retiring at the end of March to show their appreciation for all her work organising and supporting the Chairs' meetings. Carolyn said that it had been a pleasure and that she would miss seeing everyone.