



CEREDIGION LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

Ceredigion County Council
Penmorfa, Aberaeron
Ceredigion, SA46 0PA

CEREDIGION LOCAL ACCESS FORUM - ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The annual report of the Ceredigion Local Access Forum has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001.

The report looks at the operation of the Local Access Forum during 2023-2024 and identifies proposed work programme for the term.

FORUM OFFICIALS

Chairman: Peter White
Vice Chairman: Dic Evans
Secretary: Eifion Jones (Ceredigion County Council)

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1. THE CEREDIGION LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

The Ceredigion Local Access Forum (LAF), hereafter known as the 'Forum', was established in April 2002 under the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Forum performs the function of advising the local authority, Natural Resources Wales and others as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area¹ (Appendix B).

In carrying out this function, the Forum should have regard to²:

- The needs of land management;
- The desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area, including its wildlife, geology and landform; and
- Guidance given by Welsh Government.

The previous Forum's three-year term expired in March 2021 and a new Forum was appointed for the period 2022-25 in accordance with the Regulations³.

The Forum met four times in 2023 - 2024:

20th April 2023
27th July 2023
20th October 2023
25th January 2024

All meetings of the main Forum are now hybrid with the face to face element being held in Penmorfa. Improvements in technology have helped with the running of the hybrid meetings and the ability to join online has helped with members who aren't otherwise able to attend in person. Notice of the Forum's meetings was given, including agendas and other information, on the Forum's web page contained on the County Council's web site⁴.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) sub-committee met to consider the ROWIP progress and reviewing the 'Primary Paths Network' (PPN) on a 6 monthly basis. Meetings were convened remotely on the:

2nd May 2024
28th November 2023

¹ Section 94(4), Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

² Section 94(6), Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

³ The Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001

⁴ [Local Access Forum - Ceredigion County Council](#)

2. LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The County Council (as 'appointing authority') is responsible for selecting Local Access Forum members. The Forum comprises a chair and deputy chair and between 10 and 20 other members. The authority is required to appoint members who are representative of users of public rights of way or access land; owners/occupiers of access land or land over which public rights of way subsist and others with interests relevant to the County. The authority has sought to ensure a balance between users of access land and rights of way and landowners/occupiers in the appointment of Forum members.

Forum members sit for a term of three years from the date of appointment (unless otherwise terminated). In 2022 the County Council appointed members to sit for the period 2022-2025. The Forum's membership is shown in Appendix C.

A statutory observer may attend Forum meetings from both Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Welsh Government (WG). Representatives from the National Trust have also invited to meetings during the period 2022-2025 as observers and advisers; additional organisations may be invited periodically throughout the term if the members think it will add value and interest to the work of the Forum.

A review of membership was undertaken during the year as a small number of individuals had not attended meetings from some time. All individuals who had not attended received letters asking for them to attend future meetings or their membership would be terminated. Those individuals who are no longer members of the LAF have their name struck through in Appendix C.

The members agreed a request from Jane Evans who is the local representative of the British Horse Society and from a farming background to join the Forum.

A request from Anthony Jones Network Development Manager for Sustrans to attend Forum meetings was agreed as per the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001).

In order to retain a balance of interests, the members requested that efforts be made to recruit new members to the Forum with a particular focus on those from an agricultural background and those interested in recreational off-road driving. Whilst efforts are still being made with regards to new members from a farming background, members agreed an application from Mark Webb who has connections with the Trail Riders Fellowship.

3. LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ACTIVITIES 2023-2024

This section highlights the main areas of the Forum's work in 2023-2024. The minutes of Forum meetings provide a more detailed account of the work undertaken during the year.

1. Ceredigion Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

The ROWIP provides a framework for the management of Rights of Way and access in Ceredigion for a 10-year period. It is a key document for the Forum because it sets a context for the Forum's work programme and a means of assessing progress in improving rights of way and access.

A standing sub-committee oversees the Plan's progress and review the 'Primary Paths Network' (PPN) on a 6 monthly basis. This subcommittee met twice during the period undertaking valuable work in examining issues received about the network.

The ROWIP delivery plan for 2022/23 was reviewed and the delivery plan for 2023/24 was agreed.

The sub-committee members also took part in some path surveying training with the aim of assisting the Rights of Way team with future inspections and reporting.

2. Feedback from LAF Chairpersons meeting Newtown 4th October 2023

The Chair provided feedback from the LAF Chairs meeting held in Builth Wells, attended by the Chair, Secretary and Richard Price as Chair of the ROWIP sub-committee.

The topics discussed ranged from NRW's developing recreation strategy and Welsh Government Access reforms. There were some common themes arising from attendees around the difficulty in communicating issues to NRW and the difficulty of communication with and among NRW teams especially when it comes to access and, felling and the adequacy of public engagement and notices etc during tree felling operations.

3. Feedback from National Access Forum Meeting July 6th 2023

The Chair noted that had recently observed the National Access Forum meeting where the issue about dogs on leads and countryside code were again raised. He also reported on discussion about the Sustainable Farming Scheme consultation and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Recreational Strategy.

4. Gwenno Griffiths (GG) National Trust (NT) Hafod

Gwenno Griffiths gave an overview of her role as the operational manager at the National Trust's site at Hafod, explaining how NT has taken over the management of the landscape from the Hafod Trust, highlighting the challenges, opportunities and activities.

5. Historic Landscapes: Dr Toby Driver (TB) Senior Investigator Royal Commission, Wales

Dr Toby Driver, archaeological air survey officer gave a presentation around his work relating to historical landscapes and how the images produced across the county and beyond could be used in everyday scenarios.

6. Rights of Way and Access Programmes/Activities

The Secretary provided regular updates on rights of way and access matters including works completed under the Welsh Governments Access Improvement Grant and Wales Coast Path maintenance/development grants.

7. Promoting Access opportunities (Gwenfair Owen & Jill Lowry CCC)

Gwenfair Owen and Jill Lowry gave an overview of how access and recreation is promoted across the county and beyond to local residents and visitors alike.

8. Responses to consultations

The Forum responded to consultations relating to mine remediation works at Wemyss Mine, Pontrhyd-y-groes and Cwmystwyth Mine.

Members of the Forum attended meetings relating the NRW Recreation Strategy and a response was submitted to a consultation via an online questionnaire.

The Forum responded to the Welsh Government consultation on its proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme.

4. WORK PROGRAMME, 2022 – 2025

The Local Access Forum's proposed work programme for 2022-25 is set out below (agreed at the Forum meeting held on 19th January 2023).

The work programme was originally developed at the beginning of the new term of the Forum in 2022 and includes items that will be considered over a longer period. It does not include the short-term issues which usually arise for inclusion in agendas. Forum members are welcome to suggest agenda items for any meeting.

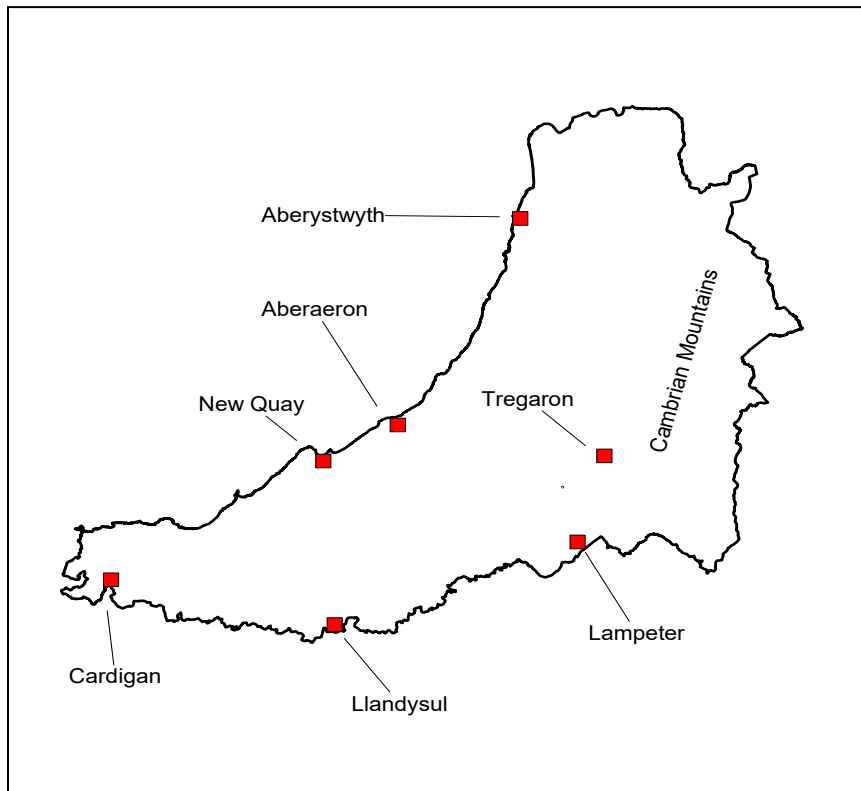
Item
Teifi Trail
Pendinas project
Report from local NRW Manager on the actions and plans in Ceredigion on access and recreational facilities.
Access Reforms update. NRW/WG representative
Cambrian Mountains Initiative – AONB status
Cambrian Mountains Initiative (access/recreation report)
Paths to wellbeing project – update from Ramblers Association
Portalis project

Ceredigion Green and Blue Infrastructure strategy –
Coed y Bont – Ponthrydyfendigaid
Longwood community woodland
Education around safe use of multi-user paths
Funding for access projects
Training for LAF members –
National Trust – Hafod Estate

APPENDICES

Appendix A

CEREDIGION: LOCAL ACCESS FORUM AREA



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prosecution or civil proceedings. Cyngor Sir Ceredigion Lce No 100024419, 2012*

Appendix B

ACCESS FORUM FUNCTIONS: COUNTRYSIDE & RIGHTS OF WAY ACT 2000

94(4) It is the function of a local access forum, as respects the area for which it is established to advise –

- (a) the appointing authority
- (b) any body exercising functions under Part I in relation to land in that area,
- (c) if the appointing authority is a National Park authority, the local highway authority for any part of that land, and
- (d) such other bodies as may be prescribed.

as to the improvement of public access to land in that area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.

94(5) The bodies mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (d) of subsection (4) shall have regard, in carrying out their functions, to any relevant advice given to them by a local access forum under this subsection or any other provision of this Act.

94(6) In carrying out its functions, a local access forum shall have regard to –

- (a) the needs of land management,
- (b) the desirability of conserving the natural beauty of the area for which it is established, including the flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features of the area, and
- (c) guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State (as respects England) or the National Assembly for Wales (as respects Wales).

Appendix C

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CEREDIGION LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (2022- 2025)

Name	Previous member of the LAF
Aeron Jenkins	Yes
Chris Thomas (Mrs)	No
David Beale	No
Dic Evans (Vice Chair)	Yes
Emma Davies	No
Felicity Wills	Yes
Glyn Davies	Yes
James Williams	No
Mari Davies	No
Maurice Kyle	No
Peter White (Chair)	No
Raymond Ricketts	No
Richard Price	No
Robert Griffiths	Yes
Robin Young	No
William Bobbett	No

Helen Donnan	No
Cllr Clive Davies (Ceredigion County Council)	No
David Hart National Trust (Observer/Advisor)	No
Michael Smith Natural Resources Wales (Observer/Advisor)	Yes
Anthony Jones Network Development Manager for Sustrans (Observer/Advisor)	No
Mark Webb	No
Jane Evans	No