

Monmouthshire Local Access

Invitation for expressions of interest in becoming a member of the Forum

Monmouthshire County Council is recruiting new members for the statutory Local Access Forum, as required under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. The Forum will consist of between 12 and 22 members. Membership will be for a 3 year period.

The function of the Forum, which has existed since 2003, is to advise the local authority, Natural Resources Wales and others, on the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and to advise and assist with the implementation of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Members of LAFs are volunteers and include a range of people from the local community, including landowners and land managers, access users and those representing other interests, such as health and conservation.

The Forum meets quarterly. It is important members can attend all meetings, as deputies cannot be permitted. These are unpaid positions but Forum members will be able to claim reasonable expenses.

Members are appointed on a personal basis, according to their personal knowledge, skills or experience of access to the countryside, including the interests of users and owners/occupiers. Any person wishing to be considered for membership can obtain further details from:

Monmouthshire LAF Secretary,
Countryside Section,
PO Box 106,
Caldicot
Monmouthshire NP26 9AN.

Tel: 01633 644850

e-mail: countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk
or more information and application forms can be downloaded from
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/monmouthshire-local-access-forum/

Completed forms are required by 18 September 2019

GUIDANCE FOR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

Background

Monmouthshire County Council is recruiting suitable persons to become new members of the statutory Local Access Forum (LAF), as required by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act).

The function of the Forum is to advise the local authority, Natural Resources Wales and other bodies exercising functions under Part 1 of the CROW Act, as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. These bodies must, by law, have regard to relevant advice given by the Forum.

Regulations require the Forum to meet at least twice a year. However, it is anticipated that meetings will generally take place quarterly.

Areas of Work

The LAF will advise upon aspects of public access in the area, including public rights of way and the right of access to open country and registered common land. The Forum will consider all forms of access, including horse

riding, cycling and off road driving, and not just access on foot. The exact nature of this work will be decided upon by the LAF itself, in agreement with the local authority.

However, work in the last three years of the Forum included:

- Commenting on various statutory or other consultations; and
- Considering improvements to rights of way in the area; and
- Assisting with the review of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

There are certain issues upon which a Local Access Forum must, by statute, be consulted. These include:

- The preparation of draft maps of open country and registered common land;
- The appointment of wardens as respect to access land;
- The making of Byelaws relating to access land;
- The preparation or review of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan; and
- Applications for long-term exclusions or restrictions on access to access land.

Copies of the Forum's agendas and minutes can be found at:
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk (under meetings, agendas, minutes)

Roles and Responsibilities

Local Access Forum Member's roles and responsibilities: -

- To be representative of users of access land, or rights of way, owners or occupiers of land, or other related interests especially relevant to Monmouthshire.
- Provide an independent view, rather than reflect the views of any particular organisation(s).
- Specifically to advise and assist in the development, review and implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and generally of countryside access strategy.
- Be willing to pursue opportunities to publicise the work of the Forum, including representing the Forum at public events / meetings and liaising with relevant national and local organisations.
- Be willing to provide a link and a communication channel between the Forum and other relevant national and local organisations, partnerships and interest groups.
- Be expected to attend as many meetings as possible but must attend at least one meeting year, otherwise their membership may terminate (Deputies are not allowed except as observers at the discretion of the Chairman).
- Be willing to serve on the forum for 3 years from the first meeting.

Monmouthshire County Council will: -

- Provide a venue for meetings of the Local Access Forum.
- Provide a secretariat and ongoing support and advice to the forum.
- Reimburse Forum members for reasonable expenses incurred through direct membership of the Forum. This may include childcare or costs for dependents resulting from attendance at meetings.
- Relay the advice given by the Forum to the relevant committee/or cabinet members of the authority at appropriate times.
- Promote the work of the Forum including preparing an annual report of the Forum's activities.

Criteria for Selection

The following is a list of criteria against which applications will be judged. However, applicants will not necessarily have to comply with all of the criteria to be successful.

It is essential that a LAF member will:

- be committed to the function of the Forum to advise the local authority, Natural Resources Wales and others as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area;
- be willing and able to play a full part in all aspects of LAF's work – persons who are only willing or able to represent a narrow specific interest may not be suitable members.

It is desirable that a LAF member will:

- have a wide range of experience of access issues in the area;
- have experience of working on, and contributing to, similar forums or working groups in the past;
- reside in, be particularly familiar with, or have any other interests especially relevant to the area of the Forum;
- be able to network with a wide range of organisations and individuals, with an aim to advising on their views and disseminating the LAF's work.

The County Council is required to ensure a reasonable balance between a) the interests of users of local rights of way

and the right of access to open country and b) the owners and occupiers of access land or land over which rights of way subsist.

The County Council has to have regard to the need to ensure, as far as it is practicable, a fair balance between persons of different genders, races, ages, disabilities and other characteristics.

The County Council also has to appoint a membership which has a breadth of knowledge and interests, and whose members are all committed to the positive function of the Forum.

These are unpaid positions but Forum members will be able to claim reasonable expenses including care costs for children and elderly or disabled dependants.

If you wish to be considered for membership please complete the enclosed application form and return **by 18 September 2019** to:

Matthew Lewis
Secretary of Monmouthshire Local
Access Forum
Countryside Section
PO Box 106
Caldicot
Monmouthshire NP26 9AN.

Or by e-mail to:

countryside@monmouthshire.gov.uk

If required you may be invited to an interview by a panel of councillors.

Final selection will be made by the appointing authority (Monmouthshire County Council)

