

# CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Title:** Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Report

**Purpose of the report:** To raise awareness of the work of the LAF and its role

**For:** Information

**Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:**  
Councillor Clive Davies, Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration

## **Introduction**

The Ceredigion Local Access Forum (LAF) is set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to advise the County Council, Natural Resources Wales and others on the way that access to the countryside is improved and managed. The Forum is a statutory body encouraged to set its own agenda.

Local Access Forums represent a broad spectrum of interests and members play an important role in improving and managing access to the County's diverse and attractive countryside. Forums are appointed for a three-year term.

To those interested in developing public access and associated recreation it can be an effective interface with Ceredigion County Council, Government Agencies and other organisations who have responsibilities or interests in these topics.

LAF members are appointed on a three-year basis; Ceredigion County Council as the Appointing Authority appointed the current Forum in 2022 and members will sit until 2025.

## **Wellbeing of Future Generations:**

**Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why.**

No – Report only on progress of the Forum.

## **Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:**

**Long term:** N/A

**Collaboration:** N/A

**Involvement:** N/A

**Prevention:** N/A

**Integration:** N/A

## **Recommendation(s):**

**For information only; to raise awareness of the work of the Local Access Forum and the preparation of the Annual Report.**

## **Reasons for decision:**

**Information only**

**Overview and Scrutiny:**

Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee- 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Policy Framework:**

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

**Corporate Well-being Objectives:**

N/A

**Finance and Procurement implications:**

None

**Legal Implications:**

None

**Staffing implications:**

None

**Property / asset implications:**

None

**Risk(s):**

None

**Statutory Powers:**

None

**Background Papers:**

None

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1- LAF Annual Report 22-23

**Corporate Lead Officer:**

Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead Officer: Economy and Regeneration

**Reporting Officer:**

Eifion Jones, Public Rights of Way Officer

**Date:**

18<sup>th</sup> January 2024



# **CEREDIGION LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23**

Ceredigion County Council  
Penmorfa, Aberaeron  
Ceredigion, SA46 0PA

# **CEREDIGION LOCAL ACCESS FORUM - ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23**

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 2022-2023 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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- B Local Access Forum Functions: Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
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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 area<sup>1</sup> (Appendix B).

In carrying out this function, the Forum should have regard to<sup>2</sup>:

- 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 Regulations<sup>3</sup>.

The Forum met four times in 2022 - 2023:

30<sup>th</sup> June 2022  
29<sup>th</sup> September 2022  
19<sup>th</sup> January 2023  
20<sup>th</sup> April 2023

The meeting of the 30<sup>th</sup> June was held remotely due to the continuation of COVID protocols. The meeting of the 29<sup>th</sup> September was a hybrid meeting with the first face to face meeting post COVID; held at the village hall in Llanddewi Brefi. The meeting of the 19<sup>th</sup> January was held remotely due to inclement weather. The April 20<sup>th</sup> meeting was hybrid with the face to face element being held at Penmorfa Aberaeron. 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 site<sup>4</sup>.

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:

23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022  
2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022

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<sup>1</sup> Section 94(4), Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

<sup>2</sup> Section 94(6), Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

<sup>3</sup> The Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001

<sup>4</sup> [www.ceredigion.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=11843](http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=11843)

Richard Price was elected Chair of the sub committee in the meeting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> August with Felicity Wills elected as Vice Chair in the same meeting.

## **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 each of the Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government (NRW). 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.

## **3. LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ACTIVITIES 2022-2023**

This section highlights the main areas of the Forum’s work in 2022-2023. The minutes of Forum meetings provide a more detailed account of the work undertaken during the year.

### **i) Local Access Forum Processes:**

#### **Appointment of Local Access Forum Chair and Vice Chair**

Mr Peter White was appointed as Chair of the Forum on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Mr Dic Evans was appointed Vice Chair on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

#### **Functions of the Local Access Forum**

A document detailing the functions of the Forum having regard to the CROW Act, Welsh Government regulations and NRW guidance, along with the Forum’s standing orders and the Memorandum of Understanding with the County Council is available to view on the Council website

<http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/coast-countryside/local-access-forum/>

**ii) Rights of Way and Access:**

**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 (ROWIP) oversees the plan's progress and reviewing the 'Primary Paths Network' (PPN) on a 6 monthly basis.

**Feedback from LAF Chairpersons meeting Newtown Oct 26<sup>th</sup> 2022**

The Chair reported on the matters discussed in the meeting with a great deal of discussion about some of the practical issues surrounding sustainable farming, woodland creation, climate change, issue of dogs in the countryside and work undertaken as part of the access reform program.

**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.

The Secretary informed the Forum of various initiatives currently underway within the County, including Cambrian Mountains initiative, Walking Festivals by Growing Mid Wales, Access Reform Advisory Group, Ramblers Paths to Wellbeing, Visit Wales and the Teifi Trail.

The Secretary informed the LAF that 2023 marks 15 years of the Ceredigion Coast Path. There will be a guided walks programme and production of coast path circular walks material as part of the celebration.

## ii) Briefings/Presentations and Other Matters:

### **Strata Florida Project**

Professor David Austin from University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD) gave an overview of the Strata Florida archaeological Project

### **Active Travel**

Gari Jones, Engineer for Ceredigion County Council with responsibility for Active Travel gave an overview of the Councils responsibilities (under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013) and identified works completed/planned with regards to active travel improvements.

### **Cambrian Mountains Society Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Lorna Brazell explained how the Cambrian Mountains Society are seeking to promote and conserve the Cambrian Mountains and their campaign to designate the area as an AONB.

### **Ceredigion Rural Crime Team**

Police Community Support Officer Billy Dunne attended the Forum to provide an overview of their work in particular relating to dogs worrying livestock and off-road vehicles.

### **Teifi Trail**

James Williams (also LAF member) gave an overview of the work being done by local volunteers to develop the Teifi Trail long distance walking route.

## **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 19<sup>th</sup> 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. They do not include the short-term issues which usually arise for inclusion in agendas. Forum members are welcome to suggest agenda items for any meeting.



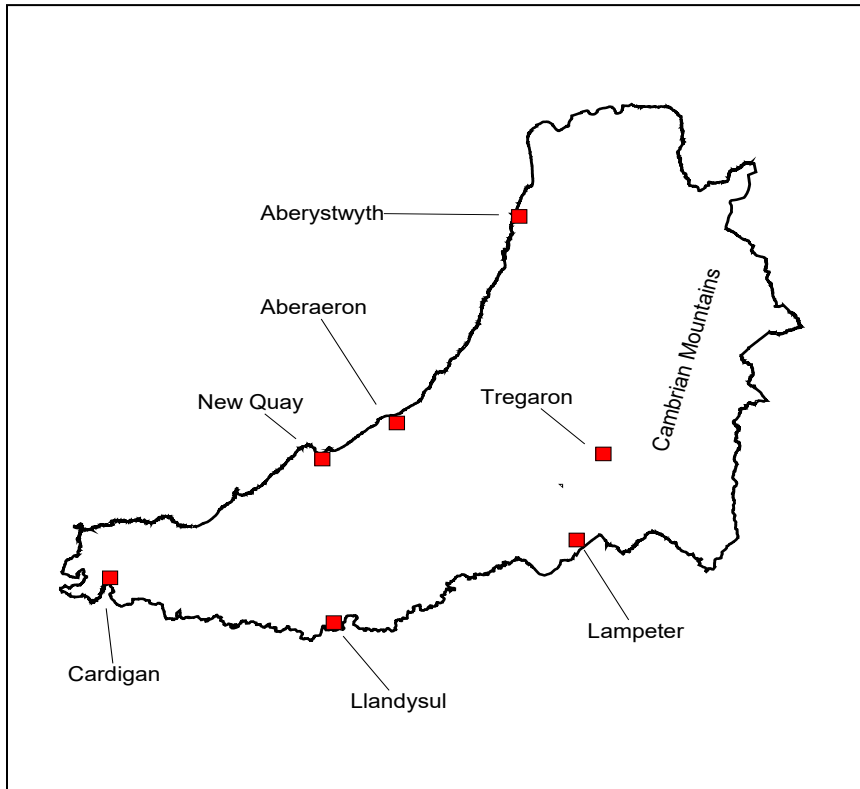
Item
Teifi Trail
Pendinas project
Report from local NRW Manager on the actions and plans in Ceredigion on access and recreational facilities.
Access Reforms update. NRW/WG representative
Cambrian Mountains Initiative – AONB status
Cambrian Mountains Initiative (access/recreation report)
Paths to wellbeing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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Previous member of the LAF</b>
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

## **CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 20 February 2024

**Title:** Recommendation from the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Report

**Purpose of the report:** To provide feedback from the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 December 2023

### **Background:**

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Report at its meeting on 18 December 2023.

Eifion Jones, Public Rights of Way Officer and the LAF Secretary provided an overview of the LAF Annual report, its work and role. The Ceredigion LAF was set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to advise the County Council, Natural Resources Wales and others on the way that access to the countryside was improved and managed. LAFs represented a broad spectrum of interests and members played an important role in the improvement and management of access to the County's diverse and attractive countryside.

LAF members were appointed on a three-year basis; Ceredigion County Council as the Appointing Authority appointed the current Forum in 2022 and members will sit until 2025. Not only was the Forum a statutory body encouraged to set its own agenda, but it was key to attract grants in excess of £100,000 a year and also as a partner in the management of Rights of Way and Access. The annual report had been prepared in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001.

Councillor Clive Davies (Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration) extended his thanks to Eifion Jones for producing the report. As a member of the Forum, he explained that the work including the presentations by external bodies was very interesting.

Committee Members agreed to note the information to raise awareness of the work of the Local Access Forum and the preparation of the Annual Report.

**Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans**  
***Chairman of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee***