

Vale of Montgomery Rural Cluster



VMRC MINUTES OF QUARTERLY MEETING 8th APRIL 2024 HELD AT SARN VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT: Cllr. Carmen Seal (Chair- Kerry): Cllr. Susan Robertson (Kerry): Cllr. Gwyneth. Jones (Abermule with Llandyssil): Cllr Alan Meredith-Jones (Abermule with Llandyssil): Cllr. Phil. Bettley (Berriew): Cllr. Debbie Kent- (Berriew): Ria Roberts (RFO – VMRC): Cllr. Eve Meredith-Jones (Clerk – VMRC)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC/VISITORS: None

1. The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES:** NONE.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were **NO** declarations of interest.

4. **MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 15TH JANUARY, 2024.**

The minutes were **APPROVED**.

5. **BIG NATURE EVENT 30th JUNE:**

Kerry and Berriew will run a simultaneous event on June 30th, It is not clear if either Abermule with Llandyssil CC or Montgomery TC will still be a part of this event, but it is hoped that they will. Tim McVey of Montgomeryshire Wildlife trust and Jackie Charlton, Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys, have both agreed to visit all the events taking place. If Abermule agree to run a Nature Event then Jackie Charlton would be asked not to visit that area due to local issues relating to the Waste Transfer Station. Cllr. Jackie Matthews who was the pivot for Abermule involvement has resigned and this may be the main reason Abermule has not yet committed to the event. It was suggested that the school could be involved to reduce the impact of Cllr. Matthew's absence.

As Rachel Carter (OVW Biodiversity Officer) was unable to speak at this evening's meeting due to personal circumstances it may be possible to invite her to join one of the online meetings to be held in order to discuss the Big Nature Event.

Various ideas were put forward for activities/learning exercises and they included

- Bug hotels.
- Bird box construction
- Bee hotels
- Bat Boxes
- Small ponds

- Wormeries
- Making bird cakes
- Learning about companion planting
- Planting wildflowers in hanging baskets
- Learning about pollinators – retired bee keeper Noel Eaton to be contacted.

It was suggested a quantity of hessian/cotton bags with suitable logo could be purchased. Cllr. Bettley will investigate this. Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust could be a source of educational literature

It was agreed that the VMRC would fund items required to make this as much of a “free to all event” as possible, up to a total of £1000 to be split between all councils taking part.

An online meeting for VMRC members was scheduled on Monday 22/04/24 for 19.00-20.30.

6. SUSTAINABLE POWYS:

The recent meeting was discussed including the implications of issues raised at it. Speakers from PCC said the approach as to how services are provided needs to change. Healthcare and children’s needs such as education take up the majority of the council budget. There are currently no funds for Net Zero for the Newtown, Llandrindod Wells, Brecon and Welshpool areas. The council stated the deficit for next year would be £64 million. It was commented that despite that figure, four new sustainability officers were to be employed at salaries over £100K. PCC will be working with PTHB to avoid any duplication in services but they would expect community councils to do more for themselves with support (initially at least) from PCC.

VMRC was originally formed in response to County Council moves towards service devolution and this sustainable Powys project seems to be returning to these ideas.

Points raised as a result of information shared from the Sustainable Powys Meeting included the lack of appropriate training and equipment for volunteers to carry out maintenance works such gully clearing. Lack of insurance for such activities was a concern. Currently the concept PCC is proposing is too vague. Sustainability of community centres was also a concern given that the grants for them no longer exist. Cllr. Bettley was particularly concerned about whether PCC would make these new responsibilities compulsory.

7. FINANCES/BANKING UPDATE/WEBSITE:

Ria Roberts circulated the VMRC accounts for y/e 31/03/24 which were approved.

It was suggested reduced membership rates could be offered to encourage new members. This was discussed and it was **AGREED** to offer Associate Membership (no voting rights) at £100 per annum. The Secretary will contact Bettws Cedewain, Forden, Churchstoke and Castle Caereinion regarding this offer.

There is now a page on KCC website for the VMRC.

The link to this page: http://www.kerrycommunitycouncil.gov.uk/VMRC_45498.aspx

8. REPORTS FROM EACH COUNCIL AREA:

AwLCC – Cllr Jones updated the meeting. PCC propose to bring black bin bag waste to Abermule Waste Transfer Station as a result of a cost-cutting measure in their annual budget.

BERRIEW – Cllr. Bettley was pleased to report Berriew has reached its Community Fibre Broadband threshold. A new councillor has been co-opted but there is also another vacancy. The woodland walk is to have children's trail an idea initiated and developed by Cllr. Kent. It is hoped to have a Gruffalo theme provided there is no copyright issue, otherwise it may be a dragon theme. Funding for this will be sought from the National Lottery.

KERRY – Cllr Seal reported that they have co-opted Eve Meredith-Jones to fill their recent vacancy. Kerry was awarded a commendation in One Voice Wales National Awards in the Devolution of Assets classification for the refurbishment of the public toilets.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING/VENUE/ AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:

8th July, 2024 – to be held at 7.30pm, Llandyssil, Old School. AGM & Quarterly meeting.