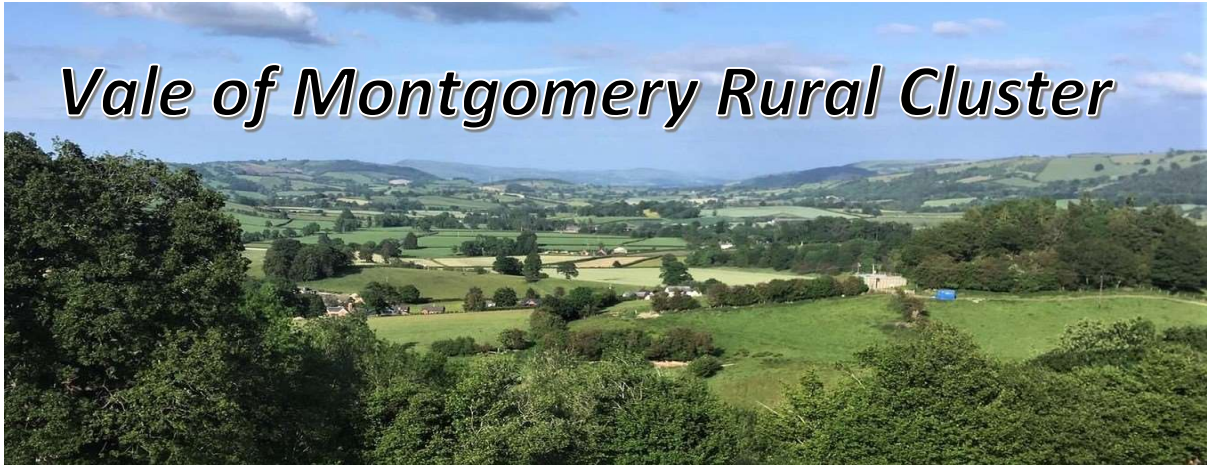


# *Vale of Montgomery Rural Cluster*



## **VMRC MINUTES OF QUARTERLY MEETING 15th JANUARY 2024 HELD AT ABERMULE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**PRESENT:** Cllr. C Seal (Chair- Kerry): Gareth Evans (Kerry): Cllr. G. Jones (Abermule with Llandyssil): Cllr J. Matthews (Abermule with Llandyssil): Cllr. Jane Rees (Abermule with Llandyssil): Cllr. P. Bettley (Berriew): Debbie Kent- (Berriew). Eve Meredith-Jones (VMRC Clerk)

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC/VISITORS:** Cllr. Robert Nash (Castle Caereinion CC)

1. The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Cllr. Robert Nash.
2. Cllr. Robert Nash – shared services: Cllr. Bettley introduced Cllr. Nash giving a brief summary of his background and relevant experience. Cllr Nash is concerned by the slow response by PCC to problems such as drainage and flooding when reported. He cited the example of when the area near the chapel in Castle Caereinion suffered severe flooding due to historical neglect in October. PCC finally admitted responsibility and cleared the drainage system which resulted in an improvement in conditions during December's downpours. Cllr Nash questioned how effective making complaints directly to PCC about issues such as drainage really is. He suggested that perhaps some funding and responsibility could be delegated to community councils in the form of area committees. Cllr Nash asked those present how they receptive they were to proposing a combined argument for a localised system. It was suggested it was important to decide in which areas of concerns could community councils/area communities realistically achieve autonomy. The complicated PCC system needs short cuts for faster, efficient outcomes. Cllr. Matthews suggested perhaps for example community councils could decide which drains needed prioritising for maintenance. As the discussion progressed the complexity of the situation became clear. Cllr. Bettley has already been out with a Highways crew to observe how they operate and it was suggested a senior member of Highways staff be invited to explain to VMRC their procedures. There are number of issues that currently contribute to the situation – budgetary pressures, staffing levels and the intricacies of the system. Cllr. Matthews suggested Cllr. Nash could ensure that the issue be raised on the agenda of the next quarterly Town & Community Councils meeting. The chair suggested a discussion at a later date and Debbie Carter was named as the best person to contact for PCC input on the subject.

The chair thanked Cllr. Nash for attending the meeting. Cllr Nash will be feeding back the meeting's responses and suggestions to Castle Caereinion Community Council and in addition it is hoped the council will be joining VMRC.

3. **APOLOGIES**: Ria Roberts (Clerk – Kerry Community Council):

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

5. **MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 9<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2023.**

The minutes were **APPROVED**.

6. **HOME SUPPORT SERVICES RESPONSE**: It was felt that it is early days for the scheme and there was still much discussion required with various issues needing clarification. Cllr Jones was concerned about funding and perhaps one financial source simply being depleted just to fulfil the needs of another. The cluster needs to be kept informed as to the scheme's progress and further details would help. The chair will email Sue Hall to request information.

7. **FINANCES/BANKING UPDATE/WEBSITE**:

**FINANCES/ BANKING** Finances are now all sorted out and have been signed off.

**WEBSITE**: VMRC to be hosted by Community websites, VMRC agenda and minutes to be posted on them.

**VMRC MEMEBERSHIP**: The fee was discussed and it was **AGREED** it would remain at £250, it was proposed by Cllr Seal and seconded by Cllr.Bettley. The chair will ask Ria Roberts to send out the invoices to Cluster members.

8. **BIODIVERSITY**:

A wide-ranging discussion took place to ascertain how community councils could work together to achieve biodiversity goals. The various suggestions/ideas and observations put forward were -

- Creating a map to show eco corridors in relation to community council boundaries
- Each community needs to know what their neighbouring community biodiversity plans so a cohesive effort is made because nature does not recognise political boundaries.
- A collaborated move forward could use the County Times and other media to publicise events and projects. Involving persons such as Iolo Williams is also possible.
- High and low value regions need to be ascertained.
- Cluster group action needed with Rachel Carter and Ezra Tattershall. being invited to future meetings to assist/inspire VMRC and its members in moving forward.
- Rachel Carter (One Voice Wales) has said more and more councils are signing up.

Points identified for working together were –

- Sharing good practices
- Wildlife corridors/watercourses
- Synergy across wildlife events based on activities for school children.
- County councillors need to link up and engage positively with biodiversity in their area.
- Involvement perhaps of Jackie Charlton – Cabinet member for a Greener Powys.
- Online corroboration to create summer events involving school children.

Kerry – Filed

AwL – Filed. Biodiversity is a permanent agenda item. There was a good response to Biodiversity issues in the AwL community council survey. MALT has had wildflower seeds sown, wildlife noticeboard erected and bat boxes have been purchased to be erected in the near future.

Berriew – Not filed yet. No land available. Suggestion of adopting land on licence.

Montgomery – No land available. No further info.

Castle Caereinion – Not filed yet

## **9. REPORTS FROM EACH COUNCIL AREA:**

AwL – Cllr Jones updated the meeting. There was an increase in responses to the recent community survey. The play area in front of Abermule school and Llandyssil play area are to be repaired, the MALT playground in Abermule remains closed and an application for Lottery funding is to be submitted.

BERRIEW – Cllr. Bettley reported there was now a defibrillator on the toilet block in the middle of the village. The residents' survey has been launched on Google with hard copies available at the village shop. The Community Fibre Partnership bid is ongoing. Only 50% of the number of households required have signed up 100 % is required for success. The response has been slow and at a recent open meeting only ten people attended five of which were councillors.

CASTLE CAEREINION – Cllr. Nash reported that the village is in a state of flux. The only facility in the village is the pub. The school despite much opposition, has closed due to the roll call dwindling down to 15-18 pupils. The school is owned by the Powis estate but as a church school is run by the Church authorities. Capital has already been spent on the school to provide provision for additional learning needs pupils. The idea of using the school for educating additional learning needs pupils has been suggested. Cllr. Nash also mentioned that due to PCC boundary changes pupils who would have gone to Llanfair Caereinion school will now go to Welshpool. This raises the possibility of siblings attending two different schools which was a concern for families. A further 29-30 new houses are due to be built in the village in the next 12-18 months. As for biodiversity projects the only land the community council owns is the playground.

KERRY – Cllr Seal reported that the new playground (for use by children under eight years old) was opened in time for the school half term break. Brynlywarch School has fallen into disrepair over recent decades and the school is seeking to build new premises, the site proposed is controversial. Kerry Shop/Post Office has issues and seeks for the community to run it.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING/VENUE/ AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:**

8<sup>th</sup> April, 2024 – to be held at 7.30pm, Berriew suggested but venue to be confirmed.

**Update: next meeting venue Sarn Village Hall**