

Vale of Montgomery Rural Cluster

VMRC MINUTES OF QUARTERLY MEETING 8th, OCTOBER, 2025 7.30

HELD AT DOLFOR COMMUNITY CENTRE, DOLFOR.

PRESENT: Cllr. Carmen Seal (Chair- Kerry): Cllr. Susan Robertson (Kerry): Cllr. Gwyneth. Jones (Abermule with Llandyssil): Cllr. Jane Rees (Abermule with Llandyssil): Cllr. Phil. Bettley (Berriew).: Cllr. Debbie Kent- (Berriew): Mike Whittall (Churchstoke) Cllr. Eve Meredith-Jones (Clerk – VMRC):

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC/VISITORS: Wendy Abel, Calum Carr & Cllr. Veronica Wildish.

1. The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr. Jules Lock (Montgomery): Cllr. Johnny Jones (Churchstoke)

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

4. **CALUM CARR & WENDY ABEL FROM PCC'S COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES**

A general overview of the history of the volunteer scheme was given and plan for moving forward outlined. There will be 13 volunteer groups. It was pointed out that it was unfortunate how the groups had been assigned into regions, not all VMRC members being in the same group. Brett Kibble will oversee the scheme, he assured us VMRC as an institution would not be overlooked. Brett feels the VMRC ethos works well. 2025 was the busiest year for volunteer numbers. For us locally there will be two groups Welshpool/Montgomery & Newtown. Brett will be the focal point for both groups and volunteers are free to work wherever they wish to.

Various views were then expressed by VMRC members

- Cllr Carmen Seal: Expressed the concern if Kerry was in the Newtown group which is large, Kerry being small would have its needs ignored. She felt Sustainable Powys could be overwhelming for VMRC members, no clarity was given to us by Diane Reynolds when she attended a previous meeting. VMRC was formed because the rural needs of our communities including Montgomery didn't fit in those of Newtown and Welshpool. Brett reassured us that the sidelining would not happen.
- Cllr. Phil Bettley: Suggested our cluster of five communities needed to get its teeth into major projects.

- Cllr. Gwyneth Jones: Expressed concern about getting the message across. She reminded us there are grants/info available including from Places for Nature, Growing Wales and One Voice Wales.

Moving forward plans include:

- Meeting with volunteer groups
- Assigning various roles
- Programme supervisor is Brett Kibble
- Appointing work supervisors
- Rolling training programme out to new volunteers.
- Mixture of old and new volunteers.
- Everyone to be trained to feel engaged and involved.
- New volunteers will be made to feel welcome.

Calum and Wendy were thanked for attending the meeting and sharing their information.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM 9TH JULY 2025.

The minutes were **APPROVED**. Proposer: Cllr: Phil Bettley/ Secunder: Cllr. Jane Rees

6. MATTERS ARISING – Update of VMRC standing orders has been completed

7. FOOTPATH UPDATE

Brett Kibble attended and various issues were discussed and problems noted by Brett

- Out of 7 jobs to be done 4 are already completed
- Stiles in Sarn are in very bad condition
- External funding – will be needed for next year (2026)
- Footpath at Uchel Dre –Possible enforcement issue
- Plan needs formulating for coming year (2026)
- Kerry walk issues some stiles still need work.
- Churchstoke – issues with stiles/clearing footpaths/signposts in poor condition.

8. BEE EVENT

VMRC will be holding its second BEE (Biodiversity Engagement Event) event 6/7 and 13/14 June 2026.

1-5pm the event will be spread across the two weekends so resources can be more easily shared.

- Kerry – taking part.
- Berriew – taking part, school already involved.
- Churchstoke – Will study details of our first event and then get back to us.
- Montgomery – Not known as no one from Montgomery at meeting.
- Abermule with Llandyssil – Currently don't feel they in a position to committing to taking part, they don't rule out helping other councils and will take the issue back to full council.

Setting up a sub committee was proposed and a date of Dec 5th to meet at the Nags Head, Garthmyl was put forward with Cllr. Bettley to confirm it was available. A template of activities will be created.

All attendees of the December meeting were asked to bring a list of ideas with them. Before Wendy Abel left the meeting, she asked that we keep in touch about what we were doing. Early suggestions for activities were -

- Curlew Connections
- Making fat balls for wild birds
- Cwm Weeg involvement
- Using old tyres to make mini wildlife ponds
- Borrowing a microscope to show children small creatures/organisms.

9. FINANCES, BANKING UPDATE. WEBSITE:

Accounts – **AGREED** and **APPROVED**. Bank balance: £4158

All subscriptions have now been paid.

The proposal that £1000 be transferred into Instant Access Savings account was **APPROVED**.

10. REPORTS FROM EACH COUNCIL:

KERRY

- The river- bank has been repaired as far as possible and the next stage is to use sheet piles to protect the bank from further erosion.
- The farm meeting at Sarn Village Hall organised by Cllr. David Jones had an attendance of 300+. It was possible to voice an opinion to Cllr. Jones about the selling off, of PCC farms/smallholdings via the Have your Say Page on the PCC website.
- Kerry Fun Day in August was well attended and enjoyed by all with various attractions including singing by Kerry Sings choir and a Fun Dog Show.
- A junior football pitch is planned for Kerry.

AWLL

- Abermule waste transfer station was open on 2nd September for 2 hours to the public, quite a lot of people attended. The planning application for processing black bin waste at Abermule is being submitted by PCC this autumn.
- The Abermule after school club is now up and running and Cllr. Alan Meredith-Jones its director reported a profit of £200 in its first month.
- Abermule Community Centre is 75years old in 2026 and a celebration is planned.
- Fundraising for the proposed new play area at the front of Abermule school continues. A Lottery grant application for £108K has been submitted and the pre-application form accepted with the remaining information to be submitted by 1st December 2025.
- Llandyssil hall now has new trustees.
- Llandyssil church has won a Gold Award for Biodiversity.
- New play equipment may be needed in Llandyssil.

BERRIEW

- Woodland walk opened by Iolo Williams. A great deal of preparation work went into this project. A dragon trail is planned around the walk the story will be written in collaboration with the local children.
- A local history project is planned, documenting the history of Berriew for the last 150 years. There may be a heritage trail and a small museum. Circular footpaths could also be a feature.
- There is a new community noticeboard (for leaflets, adverts, posters etc.) which is funded by the Berriew Show.
- Berriew has two phone boxes available for the community/council to adopt.

CHURCHSTOKE

- Discussions ongoing about access issues relating to Roundton Hill nature reserve.
- Churchstoke football pitch is currently used by Berriew footballers as an overspill pitch.
- A big revamp for the village is planned

MONTGOMERY No report as no-one from Montgomery was present.

13. FUTURE SPEAKERS – The clerk was asked to contact Powys Planning Department to see if a speaker could be arranged to talk to us about removing 106 agreements on planning applications. It was agreed that guidance on this subject would be very useful as it is a complex issue.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING, VENUE AND AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:

Next meeting is on Wednesday 14th January 2026 at the Churchstoke Community Centre, Churchstoke at 7.30pm. It was **AGREED** that VMRC would pay the venue fee.