

CILYMAENLLWYD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 – 2024

1. Introduction

This annual report provides a summary of Cilymaenllwyd Community Council's activities and achievements during the financial year 2023-24, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Democracy (Wales) Act 2021.

2. The Council

The Council's membership remained unchanged throughout 2023-24, with nine Councillors serving Cilymaenllwyd. Six meetings were held during the year, commencing with the AGM on 6th June 2023. The meetings were held on the last Tuesday of every other month at Caffi Beca at 7.30pm. Councillor Tudur Lewis was the Chairperson, following Councillor Anthony Jenner, and the Vice Chairperson was Councillor Russell Davies. Attendance in all meetings during 2023-24 was good. Councillor Dorian Phillips attended these meetings, providing updates on issues such as potholes and roadwork repairs; updates on the reopening of the Cardi Bach railway track as a footpath initiative; Local Development Plan updates and planning issues, litter and waste collection issues. Agendas and minutes of all meetings were prepared by the Clerk and were made available on the Council's website.

Some members of the public attended a few meetings to discuss public rights of way matters. One public meeting was held regarding Garmwen's planning application where nearly 70 local people attended, expressing their concerns about the proposed plans. Such was the opposition against this application for a number of reasons, the Council submitted a response to the County Council expressing their objection. The decision on this application has not yet been announced.

Following Carmarthenshire County Council's Community Review 2023, the Electoral Registration Office confirmed that Cilymaenllwyd Community Council would be unwarded i.e. that the south ward and the north ward within Cilymaenllwyd become one ward. The number of Councillors will remain the same, nine, to serve Cilymaenllwyd Community Council. This will take effect at the next local elections on 6th May 2027.

3. Activities and Achievements of the Council in 2023-24

The Council's work continued to focus on supporting and improving the community as set out below.

▪ Cilymaenllwyd Public Footpaths Restoration Grant Project

It was reported in last year's annual report that the Council had submitted an application to the value of £57,362 for a Sustainable Communities grant under the UK's Shared Prosperity Funding at the end of March 2022. In June it was confirmed that the application had been successful and the grant agreement was received in August with the expectation to complete by December 2024. The purpose of this

grant is to be able to acquire the services of a contractor to clear some of the overgrown footpaths in the Wenallt Valley.

It was agreed to establish a sub-group to implement the grant project. The sub-group membership consists of three Councillors, the County Councillor, the Clerk, the Login Volunteer Group Leader, Carmarthenshire County Council's Countryside Access Officer and a Ramblers Cymru representative. The sub-group meets monthly to proceed with the project, working closely with the appointed contractor. The sub-group also works closely with the project area landowners and have obtained written consent from each landowner. Regular discussions are held between them and the Countryside Access Officer and the contractor. As a result, a number of diversions are being made so that the footpaths do not pass through farmyards or close to domestic dwellings or through grazing land to ensure the health and safety of the public, occupants and farm animals. These diversions are being dealt with through Carmarthenshire County Council's official consultation process by the Countryside Access Officer. No objections were received during the 28-day consultation period. The project is ongoing and by the end of the project, 5,722 meters of footpaths will have been restored, linking the communities of Login, Efailwen and Pantycaws and also increasing outdoor opportunities not only for the residents of the community but also for visitors in the area.

This project has already generated much community interest. Footpath community walks are held every month; the Local History Group has been formed with the aim of gathering stories and photos of 'Ways of Life' during the last hundred years; many biodiversity activities are about to be organised and the Cilymaenllwyd Volunteering scheme is also underway. This project has certainly contributed to increasing community engagement and the Council looks forward to seeing more of this kind of collaboration in the coming years. Further information about this project can be accessed on the Council's website.

▪ **Website**

Much development work was been carried out on the Council's website by a local web developer, Jamie King Media. The website now contains all the key information and documents. More work is required on the History page and it is hoped that this will be done this year, through the Local History Group which is being set up in April 2024. It is intended to work closely with the web developer, looking at ways to advertise our website across the community and boost numbers accessing the site over the coming year.

▪ **Biodiversity**

The Biodiversity Action Plan was created in accordance with the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Part 1 – Section 6. This plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to bringing biodiversity to the fore in its activities. The scheme not only focuses on key biodiversity issues but also enables the Council to identify and support operational ways to protect and enhance biodiversity in Cilymaenllwyd.

Biodiversity is a standard item on the Council's meeting agendas and also in the subgroup meetings and progress against the actions are recorded regularly.

Biodiversity is an important aspect of the Footpaths Restoration grant project and good links have been made with Carmarthenshire County Council's Biodiversity Officers together with West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC) Officers. The Council will be producing its Biodiversity report during the summer of 2024, reporting on the progress being made with the action plan and will be publishing it on the website.

▪ **Supporting charities**

During 2023-24 a total of £3,590 was contributed to various charities that applied for financial support. These included Ffynnonwen Social Centre, Wales Air Ambulance, Carmarthenshire Urdd Eisteddfod 2023, Twm Carnabwth Sculpture Fund, Ysgol Beca PTA quiz night prize, defibrillator heating cabinet and electrical costs at Ffynnonwen Centre, new signs at the Meini Gwŷr site in Glandy Cross and the Ynys Fach picnic site.

4. Budget

Community Council activity is funded through the Council Tax. Each community council decides how much to raise to pay for its expenditure for the benefit of the community, which is the precept. In 2023-24, following a budget forecasting exercise, the precept was increased to £8,000, a £1,000 more than the previous year. The total balances and reserves brought forward at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records was £11,459. The total and reserves at the end of the year were £2,710. With the administration of the grant project, more financial transactions have been made, paying the contractor for work undertaken periodically and then claiming the money back from Carmarthenshire County Council. A full analysis of expenditure for this financial year 2023-2024 will be available in the annual accounts following approval.

The Council published its accounts for the 2022-2023 financial year in accordance with Audit Wales requirements in two public locations – one on the Glandy Cross store noticeboard and the other on the Ffynnonwen Community Centre noticeboard and also on its Facebook page. These accounts were subject to an internal audit by a qualified accountant and also an External Audit by the Auditor General for Wales.

In 2023-24 Audit Wales undertook a full three-year audit of the Council's accounts. Qualified status was awarded with recommendations for improvement on some aspects. The Auditor General's reports can be found on the Council's website, in accordance with Regulation 15(5) of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

5. Training

Attendance in training sessions was higher in 2023-24 than previously. These were mainly One Voice Wales training modules. Here is a summary of the training attended:

- Training for New Councillors – 2 Councillors attended
- Code of Conduct Training – 2 Councillors and Clerk attended

- Health and Safety Training – Clerk attended
- Community Engagement Training – 1 Councillor attended
- Biodiversity Training by WWBIC – 1 Councillor and Clerk attended

A 3-year training plan is currently being drawn up which will identify what training will be undertaken by Councillors and the Clerk over this period. This will ensure that everyone on the Council is fully aware and familiar with the various aspects of the Council's work.

6. Health & Safety

The Health and Safety Policy was formulated and approved by the Council in 2023-24. The Risk Register and Asset Register were also reviewed and updated to reflect the activity associated with the footpath restoration project. Health and safety signs were displayed in the grant project area prohibiting walkers from walking on the routes the contractor was working on. The health and safety aspects of the grant project are regularly discussed and monitored at both Council and subgroup meetings.

Another aspect of health and safety that was dealt with by the Council was the Welsh Government's changes to reduce speed limits from 30mph to 20mph in areas with street lighting no more than 200 yards from each other and located in residential and built up areas where there are walkers. These changes came into effect in September 2023 and a number of speed restrictions were introduced in Efailwen, Glandy Cross, Pantycaws, Ffynnonwen, Login and Hebron. This has had a mixed response as has the national response, however, residents of these villages affected by speed welcome these restrictions.

7. Remuneration

Under Section 147 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and in accordance with the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, it was required to make payments of £150 to Councillors for the year 2022-23 and the 'Statement of Payments' was published on the Council's website as well as notifying Welsh Government. This payment has increased to £156 (£3 a week) since April 2023 due to the increase in living costs. Remuneration for 2023-24 will be made early in the new financial year.

8. Looking forward to 2024-25

Looking to the year ahead, Cilymaenllwyd Community Council will continue to review and update its key documents and policies in the next financial year 2024-25. The Council has amended its Standing Orders in accordance with the new One Voice Wales guidelines and can be found on the website. It has also developed a biodiversity policy and action plan for the community and will be producing a report during the summer, providing an overview of progress against the action plan.

The Council's priorities for 2024-25 are:

- to ensure that the Cilymaenllwyd Footpath Restoration Project funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is successfully completed, in accordance with the conditions of the grant agreement
- to continue to implement the Biodiversity Action Plan for the benefit of the environment
- to ensure that the Council's activities meet all health and safety requirements
- to develop the history site on the Council's website and increase its use in order to boost community and cultural engagement with all age groups
- to implement the training plan and ensure good participation from Councillors in training opportunities

in order to guarantee that the Council operates effectively and safely, responding to and meeting the needs and wishes of the residents of Cilymaenllwyd.

4th June 2024

Signed by Chair 2023-24:

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Signed by the Clerk:

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