

# Pilot Activity Report

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Subject: **Community Delivery Public Access Project – Montgomery and Surrounding Area**

## Outline the pilot activity

To work with a constituted community group, and develop a sustainable volunteer workforce and footpath committee to prioritise and manage public access opportunities, especially the public rights of way network on their own demands and needs.

## What are the objectives of the pilot activity?

To recruit and have a sustained volunteer workforce, who will manage the public rights of way in their area, for their needs for social well-being and for tourism.

## How did you go about setting up the pilot activity?

We worked in partnership with an existing community cluster group of five town and community councils that were wanting to improve public access in their area. The Service developed five walking festival walks, which can be used year after year, and trained a number of volunteers to undertake practical works.

A draft Heads of Terms was agreed so it was clear where the boundaries of responsibilities rested between the Council and the Cluster Group.

It was felt that developing the walking festival routes should be the start of developing a competent and good volunteer workforce. A Footpath Committee was set up to ensure transparency and a clear audit trail on how resources were to be used and where to improve public access provision across the five town and community councils.

The cluster group has a Cable Avoidance Tool, and there is now a stable workforce led by a Volunteer Team Leader. They are deemed to be competent to be able to work without the need for supervision from the Council. However, spot checks will still be required, as the liability will still rest with the Council.

## What resources were required to set up and run the activity? Did you need to rely on others for this?

A project officer was needed for 12 months to develop the walking festival trails, to help set up governance, and deal with the recruitment and training of the volunteers. The advice and liaison with the cluster group will continue to ensure there are good lines of communication.

### What were the timescales of the pilot?

It is in some ways very much a work in progress. The Service has used volunteers for a number of years building and replacing bridges, but it has been working in a supervisory capacity. The Council now has a Volunteer Team Leader to undertake works, managing their own volunteers on paths it requires to open up under its own policies. The innovative approach with this project (which we want to do across Powys) is to train "Community Volunteers" to identify and prioritise works for themselves.

### What were the challenges of the pilot?

Recruiting and retaining Volunteer Team Leaders. In the beginning of the project, we had a retention problem but that seems to have resolved itself. The pilot project is very much asking members of the public to do more themselves.

The other challenge is to reassure people that liabilities are not being taken up by the cluster group. The Council still has a duty of care to volunteers working on public rights of way.

### How did the pilot activity work in practice?

The project officer did more practical work (i.e. installing gates, fingerposts etc) than was anticipated but otherwise the pilot activity worked as expected. In fact it seems that other community councils are interested, and this pilot project has shown good evidence of how this can work.

### If repeating this pilot activity, what would you do differently?

Getting Heads of Terms and the Memorandum of Agreement ready sooner perhaps. Otherwise, I do not think I would have done anything any differently.

### Is this pilot activity sustainable? If not, how could you make it more sustainable next time?

It is sustainable, as long as there are willing and able volunteers from the Cluster Group. The cluster group could, but it is a matter of finding their own funding for purchasing their own tools and materials, as well as a trailer to transport materials to site.

### If this activity were to continue, what steps would you look to take next?

Revising the Memorandum of Agreement with the Cluster Group. Also, sending the same MOA to every town and community council that has expressed an interest and undertake the same as what we have done with the pilot project.