

Common sense

In the Caerphilly local authority area, public access land is dominated by common land. Rudry & Caerphilly common are amongst the densest populated areas in the borough, providing a substantial resource of regional significance, so it has a huge value yet little support.

Mynydd Rhydri/Rudry Common has a unique ecosystem with diverse habitats providing important economic, social and environmental 'value' to the rural area and is closely connected to its urban communities that rely upon it. However, the landscape is under considerable threat primarily due to a high level of anti-social behavior including deliberate grass fires, fly-tipping, littering, off-road vehicles and environmental damage. Commoners can't charge the public for looking after the land therefore it requires commoner commitment, dedication and a coalition of the willing, a partnership between the many users and stakeholders to look after it and ensure its protection.

To respond to this challenge the Commoners Association together with DWR Community Council set about improving access to the common making it a safer place, creating a greater presence of users making it difficult for antisocial activity. The Commoners Association and DWR Community Council worked together with many partners to tackle these issues and enhance the area which included our communities, SW Fire service, Gwent Police, NRW and the CCBC rights of way team to confront these growing concerns.

Boulders were positioned in hot spot areas to impede access to vehicles easily tipping illegal waste; footpaths and bridle paths were improved for safer use where horse and walker could pass one another safely; we sought expertise from SW Fire service to cut fire breaks into the bracken reducing spread of potential fires taking hold; step overs were positioned so that better access was created for legal users but would impede unlawful access.

With improved rights of way we have coordinated walks to raise awareness of the culture, biodiversity and natural heritage of the land and enlisted community to continue research and data collection, a citizen science taking forward and sharing skills and knowledge.

The project has so much more to do. This is merely the beginning of the work needed to protect and

enhance the common further. A community amenity that was so important during the C-19 lockdown where nature rescued us at a time of uncertainty. We need to protect and ensure its there for us now and in the future.

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