

Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum

Annual Report 2016/17



Foreword

As the Chairman and the Secretary, we are pleased to present the 2016/17 Annual Report of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum.

The report is a very brief summary of the Forum's work. Further details, including agendas, reports and minutes, are available on the Vale of Glamorgan Council's website.

As we have said in previous Annual Reports, these continue to be challenging times for all those involved in the public sector. Whilst budget pressures continue to impact on services, we, nevertheless, are again pleased to acknowledge the Forum's constructive relationship with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The Forum is required to be reappointed every three years and the current membership has been in place since September 2015. However, many of the Forum members have been in place for much longer than that and continue to lend their experience to the Forum's work

As always, in addition to thanking Forum members for their efforts during the year, we again wish to place on record our appreciation of the support provided by the various officers involved, particularly the Public Rights of Way (PROW) team.

Eddie Williams (Chairman)

Jeff Wyatt (Secretary)

What is the Local Access Forum (LAF)?

The function of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum is to provide advice to the Council, Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and others as appropriate. Its remit covers the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area in ways which take account of land management, social, economic, environmental and educational interests.

Meetings

The new Forum met on three occasions during 2016/17 – in May, July and November 2016.

A Summary of the Year

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is now due for republication and to that end the PROW team have been making preparations for it. During 2016/17 the initial consultation, including terms of reference and timetable for the review, was produced and, subject to consultation, the new ROWIP is expected to be produced in draft during 2017/18

Rights of Way Improvement Programme (ROWIP) and Coastal Access Improvement Programme (CAIP)

The Forum monitors progress on these programmes through regular reports from officers.

ROWIP funding has underwritten four projects in the 2016-2017 period and an additional two that were unable to be progressed. The projects have involved work on 30km of priority routes, support of an "Adopt a Path" volunteer scheme and surface improvements on two school routes.

Two further projects were investigated, though were unable to be progressed this year. These were addressing the list of Definitive Map anomalies that resulted from a previous quality assurance exercise completed when republishing the Definitive Map and the creation of footpath rights near Boverton Mill. A change in landownership at Boverton Mill rendered the project not viable to complete within the grant period.

Review and delivery of a clearance programme of 30 km of priority paths was supported by ROWIP, including mapping routes and appointing contractors to undertake the work. Surface improvements at Dinas Powys addressed flooding issues that had been a constant source of complaint by raising the level of the path

through the affected area. At Llantwit Major a very muddy school route was improved by addition of a stone dust surface.

CAIP projects during 2016/17 included Legal Orders at Ogmere, Monknash and Gileston to improve the alignment of the Wales Coast Path or secure rights where permissive access had previously existed

Physical improvement projects included surfacing at Dimhole, completion of surfacing at Sully Playing Fields and also west of Cwm Colhuw.



(Dimhole Improvements – CAIP)

Maintenance Priorities

At each meeting, the Forum received reports covering the Council's Public Rights of Way (PROWs), comprising some 570kms. Maintenance issues are divided into six categories to provide a statistical breakdown. Officers also submit to each meeting an update on Modification and Legal Orders.

Consultation Responses

In 2015/16, the Forum had considered and submitted comments on a Welsh Government Consultation Document – "Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation". A summary of the overall responses submitted was reported to the May 2016 meeting."

LAF Members' Surveys of Public Rights of Way

Once again members of the Forum undertook a sample survey of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network. Overall, 10% of the network was surveyed, the 10% achieved through Spring and Autumn surveys. The detail provided by the surveyors was fed directly into the PROW maintenance database, allowing issues raised to be addressed within scheduled work programmes. The results showed a 59% pass rate for the "Paths That Are Easy To Use" return.

The Autumn return was 62% and matches the previous 5 year 62% average. The Spring survey was undertaken in May rather than the usual April and this may have contributed to the slightly higher reporting of intimidating beasts/persons; livestock would have been out of the barns.

The late Spring survey may also have contributed to the slightly higher reporting of ploughing/cropping issues. Although only 5 out of 52 paths failed due to ploughing, two of these were exceptionally long paths and directly dropped the Spring result from a 63% to 56% pass rate. An average Autumn return could not counteract the Spring result and pull-up the final yearly figure.



(Ash Path – Surface Improvements)

Presentations

In July 2016, the Forum received a presentation from the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Senior Regeneration Officer, Carol Adams on "Dog Friendly Vale".

Members continue to be grateful to all those who give their time to assist the Forum in its work.

Member Briefings

2016/17 saw the beginning of a programme of briefings for the Forum on specific subjects related to Public Rights of Way. To date, 2 workshops have been provided on Maintenance and Recording The Network.

Membership 2016-17

Eddie Williams	(Chairman)
Rhodri Traherne	(Vice-Chairman)
Mr. F. Coleman	Ms. A. Haden
Mr. J.J. Herbert	Ms. C. Lucas
Mr. H.S. McMillan	Ms. E. Nash
Mr. R. Pittard	Mr. R. Simpson
Mr. G. Thomas	
Jeff Wyatt	(Secretary)

Further information in relation to the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum can be found at

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/environment/countryside/public_rights_of_way/local_access_forum.aspx