

VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 13th February, 2019.

(i) 5.30 p.m.

Present: Mr. F. Coleman, Mrs. S. Davies, Mrs. R. Exley, Mr. Ian Fraser, Mr. Sean Gaffney, Mr. J. Herbert, Mrs. K. Lucas, Mr. Huw Stuart McMillan, Mr. Rowland Pittard, Mr. R. Simpson, Mr. G. Thomas and Councillor E. Williams,.

Also present: Mr. G. Davies (Chairman), Mr. G. Teague, Mr. A. Tovey and Mrs. S. Thomas (Vale of Glamorgan Council)

(a) Welcome/Introduction from the Secretary -

As Secretary to the Forum, Gareth Davies welcomed both new and returning Members to the first meeting of the newly appointed Local Access Forum. He explained that the Forum was required to be appointed every three years, the first Forum having been established in 2002.

(b) Introduction by Members -

Following a brief introduction from the officers present, Members of the Forum outlined their particular fields of interest and expertise, with some having submitted a short synopsis for inclusion in the papers sent out prior to the meeting.

(c) Rights of Way Team Outline of Service Areas -

Gwyn Teague provided a brief outline of the work of the Rights of Way Team, that was structured under the following headings:

Background - The Vale of Glamorgan was a diverse county, including a lengthy shoreline, good agricultural land and urban centres. Gwyn Teague advised that there were approximately 572 kms of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in the Vale of Glamorgan. The network included 511 kms of footpaths, 40 kms of bridleways and 22 kms of restricted byways.

Maintenance - Gwyn Teague advised that the Council undertook work to ensure the surfaces of Rights of Way were kept in repair and to a standard suitable for ordinary use. This often included cutting overgrowth where paths became overgrown or repairing the surface of paths where required. Each year, a number of paths that were known to be problematic were targeted for cutting at the beginning and the end of the summer.

The Council, was often assisted by volunteers and partner organisations such as Valeways, who also undertook work to replace structures on behalf of landowners. This helped ensure that stiles, gates etc remained in a state fit for use.

Additional work such as way marking, installation of signage or management of

condition surveys were also carried out by the team.

Enforcement - Gwyn Teague advised that the Council was required to assert and protect the rights of the public to use paths. As such, there were a number of enforcement duties that existed such as removal of obstruction, hazards or to take action where certain types of unlawful activity occurred. Responding to an enforcement issue involved investigation of the problem, determining those parties involved, establishing contact and developing an appropriate response that was typically through negotiation, informal warning, service of notice or prosecution.

Definitive Map and Statement - The existence and location of Public Rights of Way were legally recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement. These documents were continuously updated through the processing of legal orders that gave rise to changes or by investigating cases where it was claimed it should be shown or not shown. The Council had republished its definitive map in 2016.

Definitive Map work could involve, amongst other things, administration, quality assurance of data, historic research, collection and analysis of evidence, presentation of cases, referral and representation at public inquiries.

Legal Orders - Legal Orders may be made to alter the Public Rights of Way network due to necessity or a particular interest e.g. due to development, public or private interest.

The Council was able to assess such applications in order to give effect to the application or otherwise test it against the necessary legal criteria.

Legal Orders could involve administration, negotiation, analysis of applications, referral and representation at public inquiries.

Improvement - A significant amount of funding of Public Rights of Way work was provided through grant assistance. The Public Rights of Way Team was therefore involved in generating and delivering access improvement projects as well as administering associated grant funding.

Information - The Public Rights of Way Team worked with an supported numerous stakeholder groups including user groups, partner organisations and community footpath forums. Promotion of the network through attendance at events or publication of leaflets was also undertaken by the Team.

Performance Indicator and network management information was also collected and analysed by the team.

(d) Procedure for Claiming Expenses -

Regulation 11 of the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001 required the appointing authority to defray reasonable expenses incurred by the Forum in discharging its functions. Generally, such expenses largely related to travelling to and from meetings. Claim forms were available from the Secretary.

No.

In line with the current Council rate, it was proposed that the rate of 45 pence be paid to Members of the Forum claiming for travel to and from meetings. Members were asked to submit any claims within 12 months of incurring the same.

AGREED - T H A T the payment of a mileage rate of 45 pence per mile to Members be accepted and that Members individually notify the Creditors Team in writing with the required details.

(e) Procedure for Appointment of Chairman and Deputy Chairman -

The procedure to be followed for the appointment of Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Forum was set out in Regulation 12 of the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001. Accordingly, the appointment process would be conducted by secret ballot as the first item of business at the second meeting of the Forum later in the evening.

AGREED - T H A T nominations for, and appointment of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Forum be dealt with as the first item of business at the next meeting.

(f) Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) -

The Members of the Forum agreed that discussion of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) would be deferred to the next meeting under Agenda Item 7.

(ii) 6.30 p.m.

Present: Mr. F. Coleman, Mrs. S. Davies, Mrs. R. Exley, Mr. Ian Fraser, Mr. Sean Gaffney, Mr. J. Herbert, Mrs. K. Lucas, Mr. Huw Stuart McMillan, Mr. Rowland Pittard, Mr. R. Simpson, Mr. G. Thomas and Councillor E. Williams,.

Also present: Mr. G. Davies (Chairman), Mr. G. Teague and Mrs. S. Thomas (Vale of Glamorgan Council)

(a) Appointment of Chairman -

One nomination was received for the position of Chairman, Councillor E. Williams. A ballot, having been conducted as required under the relevant regulations, it was

AGREED - T H A T Councillor E. Williams be appointed Chairman of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum until 12th February, 2022 or such lesser period as the Forum might subsequently determine.

At this point, Councillor E. Williams took the Chair.

(b) Appointment of Deputy Chairman -

One nomination for the position of Deputy Chairman was moved and seconded, Mr. R. Pittard. A ballot, having been conducted as required under the relevant regulations, it was

AGREED - T H A T Mr. R. Pittard be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum to 12th February, 2020 or such lesser period as the Forum might subsequently determine.

(c) Minutes -

AGREED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 25th September, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

(d) Terms of Reference -

Members were asked to consider the current Terms of Reference as adopted by the previous Forum. Those Terms of Reference had been based on the model contained within the advice and best practice published by the former Countryside Council for Wales and the Welsh Government and had been revised over the years to reflect change in circumstances.

Having considered the Terms of Reference, it was

AGREED - T H A T the Terms of Reference as set out in the report be adopted.

(e) Synopsis Taken From the Meeting Notes of the National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW) -

The Forum were provided with an overview of the role of the National Access Forum for Wales (NAFW) and was advised that regular updates of their meeting notes would be provided to the Forum.

(f) Maintenance Reports -

The report showed the number of issues that were reported and resolved up to the end of January 2019. The data in the report would fluctuate due to different circumstances throughout the period shown. This might be due to staff changes, contracts, the additional reporting of issues due to performance indicator returns and also annual leave.

There were six categories that issues were placed into - clearance, enforcement, maintenance, obstacle, other and signage.

- Clearance - this issue type involved the removal of overgrowth from vegetation or the removal of rubbish.
- Enforcement - this involved more long term issues, as it dealt with the legal side of Public Rights of Way work. These issues included Diversion Orders where an order was in place to move the path along a different route.
- Maintenance - this was the main issue type dealt with and involved maintaining, repairing or replacing the furniture along the paths if needed. The furniture included stiles, posts, kissing gates etc.
- Obstacles - these were issues that blocked or made it difficult to cross a path. This could come in the form of rocks near cliffs, blocked gates or fallen trees.
- Other - issues not normally categorised or requests for a site visit.
- Signage - a category which covered way markings. This included replacing missing discs, replacing posts or pointing the way marker in the right direction.

(g) Legal Order Updates -

The Forum was updated on the Modification Order tracking and order tracking chart.

(h) Workshop - Rights of Way Improvement Plan Draft

As a background summary, the Forum was advised that the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required local authorities to produce Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs). These were intended to provide prioritised plans for the improvement of the local Rights of Way network for all users - walkers, cyclists, horseriders, off-road users, as well as people with sight or mobility problems. When introduced, the Plans were intended to cover a 10 year period.

The Vale of Glamorgan's ROWIP was first published in November 2007, the vision for the Plan was agreed by the LAF and Council to be 'To provide, maintain and improve the network of Public Rights of Way and countryside access for everyone and to enable and encourage increasingly convenient and responsible use and enjoyment of the Vale's countryside and coast'.

Work identified within the Plan was identified according to three broad areas - management, stakeholders and information/communication. These were referenced to the following principles:

- Access for All
- Management Strategy
- Sustainable Improvements
- Better Information
- Improved Network of Routes
- Wider Context.

Following the background summary, the Forum was split into three groups in order to consider three board areas contained within the ROWIP. Following discussion on each of the three areas, it was agreed for a workshop to be arranged with a time and date set by Mr. Gwyn Teague.

AGREED - T H A T a further workshop be arranged in order to consider an updated Rights of Way Improvement Plan.