

Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum

Annual Report 2022/23



Foreword

As the Chair and the Secretary, we are pleased to present the latest Annual Report of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum.

The report is a very brief summary of the Forum's work and the key areas it has looked at. 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 the impact of Covid is still being felt, 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 re-appointed every three years. Membership was renewed in November 2022 and so the current LAF appointment will run to November 2025. The LAF has welcomed several new members, so we look forward to their input and contributions over the next couple of years. However, many of the Forum members having been in place from well before the current LAF was formed, so they will continue to lend their experience to the Forum's work.

Finally, 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 with the Rights of Way Team involved particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ian Perry (Chair)
Gareth Davies (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 two occasions during 2022/23 - 29th November 2022 and 26th April 2023.

A Summary of the work of the Forum

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

The Forum considered the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The new ROWIP included updated actions and priorities, set out in a new more accessible format. The draft ROWIP would be subject to public consultation during 2023 prior to its adoption.

Legal Orders and Evidential Modification Orders Update

Officers submit to each meeting an update on Modification and Legal Orders of the rights of way network across the Vale of Glamorgan.

Coastal Access Improvement Programme (CAIP)

The Forum monitors progress on CAIP through regular reports from officers.

CAIP projects during 2022/23 included:

- St. Donats coastal path roll back.
- Annual maintenance and clearance of Coast Path.

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.

Access Improvement Grant 2022/23

During 2022-23 funding was provided to local authorities from the Welsh

Government through an Access Improvement Grant. The purpose of the grant was to support improvement of access to our Public Rights of Way network, open access land and green space. For the Vale of Glamorgan, the total grant amount for 2022/23 was £62.098k which funded several projects including:

- Roadside waymark posts and discs.
- Route furniture kits
- 2 x pedestrian footbridge.

Solar farm development in the Vale and impact on Public Rights of Way

Following a request from a member, the Forum, considered a briefing paper regarding how the Public Rights of Way Section responds to proposals around the development of solar farms. The Forum was advised that the section had to be satisfied on a number of aspects before an order was made to amend or divert a path due to the development of any related solar farm.

Network Accessibility Workshop

At the meeting held on 26th April, 2023, The LAF was part of a workshop event in order to consider the accessibility of the Rights of Way network. For this, 3 groups were created with the first group looking at the issues around accessibility from the perspective of land owners, the second group from the perspective of a user and the third group considering constraints for Rights of Way officers.

As a result, feedback from the workshop would be considered by the Public Rights of Way Team.

Areas of Focus for 2023/24 The Forum is expecting to receive a number of updates during 2023/24 including:

- Accessibility
- Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing in Wales (ENRaW) – Bridle and Bikeway

Membership 2022/2023

Ian Perry (Chair)

William Hennessy (Vice-Chair)

Stuart Bain

Ian Buckley

Samantha Campbell

Judith Cole

Frank Coleman

Lorry Davies

Susan Davies (to October 2023)

Rebecca Exley

Ian Fraser

Sean Gaffney

Jerry Herbert

Catherine Lucas

Stuart McMillan

Geraint Thomas

Councillor Eddie Williams

Gareth Davies (Secretary)

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

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/enjoying/Public-Rights-of-Way/Using-Rights-of-Way.aspx>