Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum

Annual Report 2015/16

Foreword

As the Chairman and the Secretary, we are pleased to present the 2015/16 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.

It remains a challenging time for all those involved in the public sector, Budget pressures continue to impact on services. Given the pressures on services, we are again pleased to say that the Forum continues to enjoy a constructive relationship with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The Forum is required to be reappointed every three years. Following the final meeting of the previous Forum in February 2015, a recruitment exercise subsequently took place and the new Forum was established.

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 for the first time in September 2015. Following a brief welcome and introduction from the Secretary and an outline of the work of the Rights of Way Team, Members went on to appoint Councillor Eddie Williams and Mr. Rhodri Traherne as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively.

In addition to meeting in September 2015, the Forum held a further two meetings in November 2015 and February 2016.

A Summary of the Year

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

The main item considered at the November 2015 meeting related to the requirement for Councils to revise their Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs). The Vale of Glamorgan Council's ROWIP had to be revised and republished by November 2017.

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 nine projects in the 2015-2016 period. These have involved republication of the Definitive Map, waymarking, further developments to new bridleways near Cowbridge, and practical work including drainage and replacement of stiles.

Quality assurance of the Definitive Map was previously completed. This year all outstanding Legal Event Modification Orders were completed and a new consolidated Definitive Map was published. In addition administration of CAMS and analysis of database information to inform work programmes were also undertaken to better target work.

Waymarker disks were purchased and further waymarking work undertaken in respect of bridleways near Penllyn Estate. Two drainage schemes near Cowbridge and Peterston-Super- Ely were implemented to alleviate surface run off and improve the condition of a very boggy restricted bridleway respectively.

Materials were purchased for the improvement of routes through replacement of stiles and work to install these near Llancarfan was completed.

(Looking towards Pwll Betti Sion, Llampha; (on The Millennium Heritage Trail.)

CAIP projects during 2015/16 included the commencement of numerous rollback and maintenance projects, many of which were earmarked to conclude in the following financial year.

Physical improvement projects commenced included surfacing west of Llantwit Major beach and the provision of a surfaced path at Sully Sports fields, due to conclude 2016/17.

Legal agreements and orders were commenced in respect of paths at Ogmore, Monknash, and Gileston.

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

The Forum continued its role of responding to various Consultation Documents, including

- Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

Following discussion of Draft Guidance issued by Natural Resources Wales on behalf of the

Welsh Government, the Forum's comments were submitted. The Forum's response included expressing a view regarding the need for sufficient resources to be made available for the assessment and publication of new ROWIPs, as well as a view that the requirements should be relaxed as they were felt to be somewhat onerous.

- "Improving Opportunities to Access the Outdoors for Responsible Recreation"

A Welsh Government Consultation Document was considered and comments submitted.

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 71% pass rate for the "Paths That Are Easy To Use" return. This was the highest pass rate for this return in the 19 years of annual surveying.

The 77% return for "Paths Signposted From The Road" showed a slight drop of 3% from the returns for the previous 2 years, but remains higher than the 71% average for the previous 5 years.

(Penllyn – Castle, Court & Wells Walk)

Presentations

In February 2016, the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Senior Rural Regeneration Officer, Helen Blackmore, gave a presentation on the Rural Community Development Fund.

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

Membership 2015-16

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