

## **VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

MINUTES of a meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2006.

Present: Mr. M.R. Harvey (Chairman); Mr. D.J. Field (Vice-Chairman); Mr. J.V. Custance, Mrs. V.M. Hartrey, Mr. J.J. Herbert, Mr. D.T. Hopkin, Mrs. H. March, Mrs. M. Morgan, Mr. N. Moss, Mr. R. Pittard, Mr. R. Traherne, Mrs. V. Warlow and Mr. D. Williams.

Mr. F. Coleman, Mr. C. Jones-Jenkins, Mr. S. Latham, Mrs. S. Thomas and Mr. J. Wyatt (VOGC).

(a) Apologies for absence -

These were received from Mr. R. Simpson and Ms. S. Tindal (Countryside Council for Wales).

(b) “Improving Countryside Access in the Vale” : Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan -

Irene Evison of the consultancy “Resources for Change” was in attendance to present “Improving Countryside Access in the Vale” - the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Ms. Evison outlined how the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan had evolved and took the Forum through the various elements of the draft Plan. In essence, the draft Plan outlined the strategies that would form the basis for the management of the Vale of Glamorgan’s rights of way network over the next 10 years. The document was the result of a significant amount of work, including consultation with a wide range of individuals and organisations regarding the issues they believed were facing the network and the steps that could be taken to facilitate improvement.

The Council’s Rights of Way Team had been working to prepare the ROWIP since 2003 and the document would provide the basis for annual work programmes. In addressing Members, Ms. Evison alluded to the main components of the draft ROWIP viz:

- a brief Executive Summary
- abbreviations and glossary
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Introduction to Rights of Way in the Vale
- Strategic Context
- ROWIP Process
- Management
- Stakeholders

- Information, Communication and Promotion
- Statement of Action.

Ms. Evison acknowledged that a significant amount of material had already been in existence when work on the draft ROWIP commenced. She also alluded to the Assessment Report which had been considered previously by the Forum as part of the ROWIP process. The Assessment Report itself had been subject to a consultation exercise which, in turn, had informed the draft ROWIP. Whilst Countryside Council for Wales guidance existed regarding the content of ROWIPs, the document would need to reflect the actual situation existing within the Vale of Glamorgan. She proceeded to outline the methodology used in the consultation process, summarised the main themes and aims of the draft ROWIP and stressed to the Forum the importance of the Statement of Actions contained at the end of the ROWIP.

The draft ROWIP was also to be subject of consideration by the Council's Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) and Cabinet. Members were informed that, in addition to the ability to ask questions and submit comments at the meeting itself, they would be able to forward any detailed comments to F. Coleman after the meeting. F. Coleman confirmed that notwithstanding resourcing difficulties, the Plan would be used to produce an annual work programme based on the Statement of Actions and reflecting changing priorities as the Plan evolved through its various timescales. It was envisaged that the first draft annual work programme would be submitted to the Forum in early 2007.

In opening up the discussion on the draft ROWIP, the Vice-Chairman congratulated Members of the Rights of Way Team on their contribution to the creation of a comprehensive, yet suitably succinct, document. A number of other Members of the Forum concurred with this view, albeit reference was made to an example of "management speak", which it was agreed would be reconsidered. Reference was also made to strengthening the wording contained in the document regarding the seeking of funding sources and, again, it was agreed that this particular section would be re-examined. Agreement was also reached on the need to consider, where appropriate, further cross referencing of actions and to the need to acknowledge the relationship between the updating of the Definitive Map and Ordinance Survey maps.

Members also referred to the need to insert the rationale behind the increase from 5% to 10% in the random sampling methodology to be used. Certain Members were also of the view that, perhaps, a different methodology of random sampling could be used which would be more effective but would not conflict with the desired outcome requested by the Welsh Assembly Government in its Performance Indicators. Notwithstanding the logic of the suggestion, the methodology for the comparative sample was clearly set down by the Welsh Assembly Government.

It was agreed that the possibility of grouping various actions would be considered in order to create "discreet projects" for which bids for financial

resources could be made and possibly have a greater chance of successfully obtaining resources.

One further issue alluded to concerned Action Point 18 which referred to the implementation of least restrictive access for all future maintenance or improvement works by looking at a process of “gap-gate-style” (in that order), in consultation with land owners and occupiers. Various Members of the Forum considered that it would be completely impractical to consider the provision of gaps where any livestock was involved. Furthermore, gates were unlikely to be a realistic option unless they constituted kissing gates, given the growing issue of litigation against landowners / farmers.

Consideration was given as to where the draft ROWIP would fit in with the Council’s overall strategy framework. F. Coleman, in referring to the Welsh Assembly Government’s rationalisation of plans, confirmed that there would only be four high level strategies required from local authorities by WAG. He referred in particular to the introduction of a Regional Transport Plan, which, with the new Local Development Plan and Community Strategy, would act as the “umbrella” for plans such as a ROWIP.

Responding to the issue of whether any “quick wins” could be achieved within the process, F. Coleman referred to the difficulty in identifying any such proposals within a strategic document. However, a more likely avenue for doing so would be within the annual work programmes (perhaps, for example, within the area of coastal access).

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked Members of the Forum for their constructive comments, expressed his appreciation to the Rights of Way Team and Ms. Evison for their work and confirmed that the document would now be considered by the Council’s Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) and Cabinet.

**AGREED - T H A T** the draft ROWIP be commended and all those involved in its production be thanked.