

VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 23rd November, 2016.

Present: Councillor E. Williams (Chairman) ; Mr. R. Traherne (Vice-Chairman) ; Mr. F. Coleman, Mr. J.J. Herbert, Ms. C. Lucas, Mr. H.S. McMillan, Mr. R. Pittard and Mr. G. Thomas.

Mr. J. Wyatt, Mr. S. Pickering, Mr. G. Teague and Mrs. S. Thomas (Vale of Glamorgan Council).

1. Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Ms. E. Nash and Ms. M. Miyata-Lee (Natural Resources Wales).

Whilst informing the Forum of Ms. Miyata-Lee's apologies, the Secretary also referred to an e-mail he had received from Natural Resources Wales referring to recent restructurings and loss of posts within the Access and Recreation Division. NRW had indicated that they still planned to attend LAFs at least once a year.

2. Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 27th July, 2016 be approved.

3. Local Access Forum Conference : 19th October 2016

Mr. J.J. Herbert had attended the Conference on behalf of the Forum. He also pointed out that Mr. R. Pittard and Mr. R. Simpson had also attended in their capacity as Members of the Bridgend and Cardiff Local Access Forums respectively.

Mr. Herbert referred in particular to two presentations given at the Conference, viz

1. A presentation from Ms. Rachel Lewis-Davies, National Farmers Union Cymru based on looking at access issues from a landowner perspective. He considered the presentation to have been extremely interesting and hoped that it would be issued in due course along with the minutes of the Conference. The presentation had given attendees a good understanding of the need to understand and achieve a balance between access for users and landowners' needs.

2. A presentation from a representative of Cycling UK, which Mr. Herbert felt, unfortunately, illustrated a desire for users to be able not to be restricted to cycling on Rights of Way, but where ever they wished to. He also referred to a recent press article regarding an increase in illegal off-road biking within the South Wales Valleys and to NRW concerns regarding such.

Mr. Pittard indicated he would like to allude to various issues regarding Natural Resources Wales, some of which were linked to the Conference. He also alluded to the fact that he would be producing a newsletter regarding the Conference in his capacity as a Member of the Youth Hostel Association, which he would be happy to forward to the Secretary for distribution to Forum Members. He also pointed out that the next LAF Chairs' meeting was to take place on 8th December, 2016.

As far as NRW was concerned, Mr. Pittard referred to there being a lack of representation at the Conference, despite there being several current NRW workstreams which could affect LAFs and/or Local Authorities' work. He considered that it would be advantageous if there was, at least, a periodic report from NRW as to the potential impact on LAFs and/or Local Authorities of their various workstreams. He was fully aware that they had been subject to cutbacks, but, nevertheless, alluded to their statutory requirements in certain aspects.

Mr. Pittard also referred to the development (following on from the Environment Act) of a Statement of Natural Resources in Wales, which would become an annual publication. The hope was that the state of natural resources would improve, not deteriorate, over time. He alluded to the fact that there appeared to be many elements being dealt with by the Environment Sections of NRW, but that, arguably, there should be more involvement of the Access Sections.

Mr. Pittard also informed the Forum that there was also an NRW workstream underway in terms of looking at how to mitigate against factors effecting natural resources (e.g. climate change). He also referred to an open meeting taking place in Cardiff on 7th December 2016 regarding Sustainable Land Management and he considered that LAF representation would be useful. Members were able to register to attend on an individual basis.

Finally, Mr. Pittard referred to the development of Local Service Boards and their replacement by Public Service Boards. He suggested that NRW staff (given the pressures on resources) might find it difficult to be able to give advice to a Board given its extremely wide remit. He mentioned the development of Area Statements, but suggested that the actual areas had yet to be identified.

Mr. Teague acknowledged the importance of the issues alluded to above, particularly, for example given the requirement on all Local Authorities to rewrite their Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

Mr. Herbert felt that NRW was beginning to establish itself as an organisation, but pointed out that it was being affected by significant external factors such as the Wales Bill, the effect of the Welsh Government elections and Brexit.

Mr. Traherne concurred with many of the sentiments expressed and felt there were clearly resource implications affecting NRW.

Mr. Pittard suggested that, given the external factors alluded to earlier, the issue of 'access' was potentially way down the relevant Minister's agenda.

AGREED - T H A T the Secretary convey to Natural Resources Wales the points raised during the Forum's discussion and invite a representative of NRW to address the next meeting of the Forum.

4. Draft Annual Report 2015/16 –

The Secretary presented the draft Annual Report 2015/16 for consideration. Mr. Coleman pointed that there was a small element of duplicated text on page 4 of the report. The Secretary also undertook to (prior to publication) review/identify the small number of photographs contained in the report.

AGREED – T H A T the draft Annual Report be endorsed for publication.

5. Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP): Grant Update –

The project comprised a number of programme actions aiming to assist in the delivery of ROWIP Objectives.

Ref	Location	Brief Details of Programme Action	Update
VG1	Summerhouse Point	Dedication of rights at Summerhouse	Approval to proceed with an Order had been granted by Committee. Instructions were with Legal Services regarding compensation, due imminently.
VG2	Countywide	Adopt a path co-ordination of works	Instructions for maintenance issues on adopt a path routes had been issued for Six Village Walk; Warlow Walk; Bonvilston Circular; In and about Welsh St. Donats; Castle Court and Wells.
VG3	Countywide	Definitive Map anomalies – resolve long standing issues by order	Commencement of project delayed whilst staffing confirmed. Likely to be rescheduled for 2017/18.
VG4	30km of priority routes	Vegetation clearance	Annual clearance cuts complete.

VG1 provided for the dedication of public footpath rights along a track between Boverton Mill and Summerhouse Point. The grant allocation reflected anticipated compensation figures in addition to legal costs.

VG2 would support the co-ordination and resolution of maintenance issues on promoted routes that were part of the Adopt a Path scheme.

VG3 would begin to address long-standing issues identified during the quality assurance of the Definitive Map process. This was likely to be through a mix of Orders, negotiations and / or enforcement where appropriate.

VG4 would support the annual clearance of inland routes.

Mr. Teague anticipated that ROWIP funding would continue in 2017/18, albeit he was uncertain as to what would happen after that.

6. Coastal Access Improvement Programme: Background and Update –

The Coastal Access Improvement Programme (CAIP) was a scheme funded by the Welsh Government via Natural Resources Wales and delivered through Local Authorities.

Since the Wales Coast Path officially opened on 5th May, 2012 the scheme, which initially ran from 2007-2013, had continued to fund the development and improvement of the route. Following completion of the initial project further funding was made available; this ran from 2013-2015.

The current programme was initiated by a Ministerial announcement that committed £900,000 worth of funding per annum for the next five years to the Path. The current scheme differed from the previous inasmuch as funding was divided between improvements and maintenance, to reflect the maturing nature of the Coast Path.

Offers of grant had been received and accepted for the following improvement projects. Updates on each were included below. It was also anticipated that a further project at Sully Playing Fields would continue, though funding had yet to be confirmed for 2016-17 in respect of this.

Code	Location	Details	Update
VG1601	Dimhole	Path close to edge requires cutting back into cliff and provision of level surface as it ascends from Cwm.	Works complete.
VG1501	Ogmore Down	Conclude outstanding creation agreement on path, formalising new alignment that avoids needs for road walking.	Order drafted.
VG1502	Traeth Mawr	Missing link currently available on permissive basis only. Previously submitted as Creation Order. Landowner has	Agreement issued for completion.

		indicated willingness to revert to agreement.	
VG1505	Cwm Colhuw West	Improve surface by addition of loose stone (type 1).	Works complete.
VG1507	Gileston	Creation of missing link. Previously submitted as Creation Order. Landowner has indicated willingness to revert to agreement.	To be completed as concurrent Order and agreement. Consultation complete on both. Agreement ready to be issued.
VG1602	Sully Playing Fields	Provision of 530 metres ultitrec path at width of 1.2m along south of playing fields. Timber edging.	Contractor appointed. Survey delayed, though anticipated shortly.

In addition, an allocation for coast path maintenance via grant and at 75% grant rate had been advised. In the Vale for 2015-16 this amounted to £19,230 of grant to be matched by £6,410. It was anticipated that this would be issued each year over the life of the Programme:

Code	Description	Details	Update
Maint	Maintenance Projects on VoG WCP	Vegetation cut back, maintenance of furniture and surfaces.	Seasonal cuts complete. Fencing around cliff fall installed. Reallocation to assist with Sully Playing Field spend. Coast path markers to be installed.

There was general agreement that the amended format of the report was to be welcomed.

Mr. Pittard asked as to progress regarding the appointment of a Coastal Access Officer. Mr. Teague confirmed the post had been advertised externally, with shortlisting to be undertaking on 28th November and interviews to be held on 14th December, 2016.

7. Maintenance Reports –

The Forum was provided with an update in relation to maintenance work carried out across the Vale of Glamorgan from March 2011 to November 2016. The report also detailed the maintenance issues that had been logged and received from March 2011.

Mr. Teague reminded the Forum of the day of practical/volunteer work which had been arranged (as alluded to at the last meeting). This would take place on 6th December, 2016, commencing at 10.30 a.m. at the Porthkerry Country Park Lodge. The Secretary undertook to remind the Forum by e-mail of the event and

that, if they wished to attend, they should inform Mr. Teague direct.

8. Legal Orders and Evidential Modification Orders Updates –

Mr. Traherne declared an interest in Legal Order 80 (St. Nicholas) and took no part in the discussion on this item.

The Forum was presented with an update on the Legal Orders and Evidential Modification Orders across the Vale of Glamorgan. (It being noted that the dates in respect of Legal Order 70 (Wenvoe) and Modification Order 10 (Romilly Park Road), Barry) should, in fact, read 2017, not 2016).

9. Member Briefing: Recording the Network :

Mr. Teague indicated that the presentation would, in fact relate to Recording the Network, as opposed to Enforcement (as indicated on the agenda). The presentation included reference to the following areas:

- Background
- Definitive Map and Statement
- PROW Origins
- Modifying Record – Legal Event
- Modifying record – Evidential Event
- Adding or Upgrading a Path by Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO)
- Removing or Downgrading a Path by DMMO
- DMMO Process.