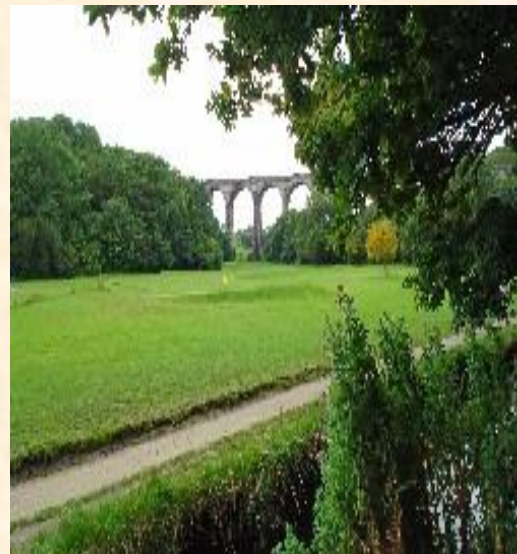


# **Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum**

## **Annual Report 2012/13**



## Foreword

As Chairman and Secretary we are pleased to present the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum.

Hopefully, you will find the new streamlined format “user friendly”. Further details, including agendas, reports and minutes, are available on the Council’s website.

Life continues to be very challenging for those involved in the public sector, especially with budget pressures continually increasing. Nevertheless, we are both of the view that the Forum continues to enjoy a constructive relationship with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

In addition to thanking Forum members for their efforts during the year, we would also like to place on record our appreciation of the support provided by the various officers involved, particularly the Public Rights of Way (PROW) team.

Finally, a brief mention of former Vale of Glamorgan Council officer, Lorraine Pugh, who retired during the summer and who had provided superb support to the Forum since its original inception in 2002.

**Frank Coleman (Chairman)**  
**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](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/environment/countryside/public_rights_of_way/local_access_forum.aspx)

## 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

Four meetings of the Forum took place during the year - in May, September and December 2012 and, finally, in April 2013. Two of the meetings were held at venues outside of the Civic Offices, enabling members to view “work on the ground”. The May 2012 meeting took place at the Heritage Coast Centre, Southerndown.



**(Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre)**

Prior to the meeting, Forum Members undertook a walk along the Coast Path to Cwm Mawr and took the opportunity to inspect works undertaken in the area.

In September 2012, the Forum met at the Community College, Old Hall, Cowbridge. Again, the opportunity was taken to view a scheme completed under Rural Development Plan (RDP) and Rights of Way Improvement Programme (ROWIP) funding, which upgraded the important footpath link from the Cowbridge Comprehensive School to the Town Hall car park.

## A Summary of the Year

### Maintenance Priorities

Throughout the year, the Forum received reports covering the Council's Public Rights of Way (PROWs), comprising some 554kms. Maintenance issues were divided into six categories to provide a statistical breakdown. Members were requested to identify those issues they considered required to be addressed as a priority.

Following these discussions at earlier meetings, in December 2012 Members participated in a workshop to discuss approaches to future maintenance of paths. As a result, a refined prioritising system for footpath maintenance has been developed by the PROW Officer.

### Rights of Way Improvement Programme (ROWIP) and Coastal Access Improvement Programme (CAIP)

The Forum monitors progress on these programmes through regular reports from officers. Much practical progress has been made during the year, including:

- a number of PROW creation agreements
- extensive signage improvements
- match funding of important projects under the Rural Development Plan
- the completion of quality assurance of the Definitive Map.

A particular highlight was the opening of the All-Wales Coast Path on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2013.



(Wales Coast Path, Southerndown)

### Consultation Responses

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

- the Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan
- Sustaining a Living Wales

- the consultation paper relating to the establishment of Natural Resources Wales
- Active Travel (Wales) Bill
- Glastir Permissive Access Maps.

### **LAF Members' Surveys of Public Rights of Way**

Members of the Forum once again undertook a 5% sample survey of Public Rights of Way during the Spring and Autumn. The results showed that the overall percentage for "paths that were signposted from the road" and "paths that were easy to use" had increased compared to 2011/12. These surveys are fed into national statistics for all Welsh Local Authorities and provide a valuable source of information for the Council's Public Rights of Way team.



**(LAF Members "on their travels")**

### **Involvement with Others**

The Chairman continues to represent the Forum at meetings of the Welsh LAF Chairs and on the Rural Development Plan Footpath Grant scheme. The Vice-Chairman is actively involved with the Steering Group which promotes Walking in the Rural Vale.



**(Improvement of steps behind the lifeguard station at Cwm Colhuw)**

### **Presentations**

In May 2012 Chris Heaps of the former Countryside Council for Wales gave a presentation on the Review of Open Access Maps. In April 2013, Helen Blackmore, the Council's Senior Rural Regeneration Officer, gave a presentation on the new initiative to Promote Walking in the Rural Vale.

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

### **Membership**

<b>Frank Coleman</b>	<b>(Chairman)</b>
<b>Mike Dunn</b>	<b>(Vice-Chairman)</b>
<b>Val Hartrey</b>	<b>Geraint Thomas</b>
<b>Jerry Herbert</b>	<b>Rhodri Traherne</b>
<b>Simon Lait</b>	<b>Cllr. Eddie Williams</b>
<b>Kay Lucas</b>	<b>Stuart McMillan</b>
<b>Elizabeth Nash</b>	<b>Mike Parry</b>
<b>Rowland Pittard</b>	<b>Robin Simpson</b>
<b>Christopher Short</b>	
<b>Jeff Wyatt</b>	<b>(Secretary)</b>