

VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 2nd December, 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#)

The Meeting recording is available [here](#)

Present: Councillor E. Williams (Chairman), Mr. F. Coleman, Mrs. S. Davies, Mr. I. Fraser, Mr. S. Gaffney, Mr. J. Herbert, Mrs. K. Lucas, Mr. H.S. McMillan and Mr. G. Thomas.

Also present: Mr. G.J. Davies, Mr. S. Pickering, Mr. G. Teague, Mr. P. Chappell, Ms. M. Sims and Mrs. S. Thomas (Vale of Glamorgan Council).

(a) Chair's Announcement –

The Chair offered thanks and appreciation to Mr. G. Teague, Public Rights of Way Officer who was leaving the employment of the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The Forum expressed its appreciation for Mr. Teague's service and work since 2010 and wished him well for the future.

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd March 2021, be approved as a correct record.

(c) Local Access Forum Composite Annual Report 2019/20 and 2020/21 –

The Secretary presented the draft Composite Annual Report 2019/20 and 2020/21 for consideration. This covered two municipal years due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which meant that no meetings were held during 2020.

AGREED - T H A T the Local Access Forum Composite Annual Report 2019/20 and 2020/21 be endorsed for publication.

(d) Maintenance Reports –

The Forum was provided with an update in relation to maintenance work that had been carried out during the current financial year. This included:

- 45 kissing gates installed to replace stiles
- 15 Two in One gates installed
- 8 stiles repaired
- 5 new foot bridges built
- 35 km of vegetation cleared from footpaths

In addition, the PROW team had received 75 inspection reports.

AGREED – T H A T the maintenance report be noted.

(e) Legal Orders and Evidential Modification Orders Update –

The Forum was presented with an update on the Legal Orders and Modification Orders across the Vale of Glamorgan.

Mrs. S. Thomas advised that Legal Orders for the path at Darren Farm had been completed, as had the one for Dinas Powys. In addition, Path Number 15 in Llancarfan, had been subject to a diversion order as this had been under water for a number of months.

With regard to evidential modification orders, Mr. Teague provided an update on the following:

<u>Ref</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Current Position</u>
1	Clive Rd to Island Rd, Barry	Dormant
12	Village Farm House, Colwinston	Dormant
13	Dyfan Rd to Caradoc Ave, Barry	Investigation Complete
14	Atlantic College, St. Donats	Dedication of route offered
15	Er Efail, Troes	To be investigated
20	Mill Lane, Boverton	Under investigation
17	Clos Cwm Barri, Barry	Under investigation
18	Robins Close, Barry	To be investigated

Mr. Teague confirmed that the order for Atlantic College, St. Donats was due to the path not being recorded.

Agreed – T H A T the update report be noted.

(f) Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing in Wales (ENRaW) –

The Forum received an update the ENRaw Green Trails feasibility study, for which, the Vale of Glamorgan Council had previously acted as lead partner in a regional collaboration for the development of a plan to establish improved bridleway links through the counties of Bridgend, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr.

The Green Trails project aimed to pilot delivery of a coherent network of green corridors within the South Wales Central region for the purposes of improving bridleway access and habitat connectivity. The project also explores financial and practical measures to secure the long-term sustainability of that network.

The objectives of the project were:

1. To provide safe access opportunities for horse and bike users

2. To establish sustainable management systems that enhance ecological resilience
3. To animate communities and establish connective structures at a regional level.
4. To undertake feasibility for development of a gateway facility that will contribute to long term sustainability.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council would be acting as the lead partner amongst a collaboration of the following partners:

Bridgend Council:

Highway authority for the respective county.

Competent authority for creation, improvement and management of public rights of way.

Vale of Glamorgan Council:

Highway authority for the respective county.

Competent authority for creation, improvement and management of public rights of way

Cardiff City Council:

Highway authority for the respective county.

Competent authority for creation, improvement and management of public rights of way

Rhondda Cynon Taff Council:

Highway authority for the respective county.

Competent authority for creation, improvement and management of public rights of way

Merthyr Tydfil Council:

Highway authority for the respective county.

Competent authority for creation, improvement and management of public rights of way

British Horse Society:

Contact and coordination of user base (horse riders) for animation and volunteer activities.

Advice on trail standards.

Sustrans:

Coordination of linkages with National Cycle Network.

Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation

Assistance with promotion, marketing and user networks

Cycling UK:

Contact and coordination of user base (cyclists) for animation and volunteer activities.

Expertise in development of previous long distance bike trails.

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales:
Contact and coordination of volunteer activities.
Advisory role in respect of ecological activities.

Mr F. Coleman commented on the grant funding, stating that presumably most of the money was for assessment, research and planning purposes. Mr. Coleman added that as the project would be managed by the Vale of Glamorgan, due to distances involved there would be a lot of time and effort of Officers for example speaking to landowners in areas a long way away. In reply, Mr. Teague advised that the project had already been running for 2 years, and good relationships had been built with all of the partner Local Authorities so local assistance and help would be expected. The Field Officer had been working with each of those individual Rights of Way Teams to look at concerns, so part of setting this up had been identifying places where we can store kit in the other authorities. In terms of bases that Officers could operate from to install new structures, that work would also be divided up between the different partner organisations.

With regard to the breakdown on what the grant funding would be spent on, Mr. Teague advised that all of this came under the revenue budget, but there was a substantial amount for site works and improvements. Mr. Teague added that this was how Welsh Government had decided to divide up the different costs, so there was a substantial amount for the assessment process. Welsh Government would be aware of where the money was to be spent as they had received copies of the feasibility study and it had been made clear where new structures would be installed.

Mr. Gaffney queried that as funding had been provided to 2023, was that the completion date for the project. In response, Mr. Teague advised that 2023 marked the end of Phase 1. Beyond that there was a hope that the project would be sustained via alternative funding sources. For example, a feasibility study had been commissioned to look at income generation from a bike park near Leckwith. It was hoped that this facility would act as a gateway to attract more people into the trail.

In terms of collaborative work across the whole of Wales, Mr. Teague stated that the overall grant from Welsh Government was very substantial, with funding linked to the theme of collaborative working. There were a number of similar projects taking place in other regions, as well as national projects. For example, under the same funding, the Ramblers Association had been granted money to look at where paths and walking could assist the wellbeing program and they had carried out consultation up and down Wales to try to generate opportunities for the volunteers to go out and improve routes around communities that they had selected.

Agreed – T H A T the update report be noted.

(g) Access Improvement Grant –

Mr. Teague provided an update on the Access Improvement Grant. The purpose of the grant was to support improvement of access to or on the Public Rights of Way network, open access land and green space.

An offer of £62,098 of funding relating to the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 had been made to the Council to carry out works specified in the below schedule.

Project title	Description of project	Location
Newton House Farm	Improvement of surface to remedy poor drainage and mud	Cowbridge
Small Scale Infrastructure	Procurement and installation of furniture kits	County wide
Porthkerry FP31	Completion of surfacing on FP31 at Cwm Barri	Porthkerry Park
Streetview routes	Capture, edit and upload promoted routes to streetview	Vale Trails promoted routes
Porthkerry Boardwalk	Installation of boardwalk materials purchased 20-21	Porthkerry Park
Ardwyn	Provision of semi-bound surface and hand rail	Dinas Powys
Llantwit Cemetary Path	Extension of ultitrekk surface along FP42 (outside perimeter of cemetary)	Llantwit Major
Llantwit School Path	Provision of surfacing on link to school alongside brook	Llantwit Major
Anomolies	Resolve alignment issues where map and ground differ	County wide

AGREED – T H A T the report be noted.

(h) Coastal Access Grant –

Mr. Teague provided an update on the Coastal Access Grant, advising that an offer of £111,863 had been made, consisting of £104,863 for maintenance and improvement of the Wales Coast Path (75% of total cost) and a further £7000 for path realignment (100% of costs).

The improvement programme included the following items:

Project No.	Location	Grant	Project Description
1	Lavernock	22500	Surface of path has been scoured by rain, requires replacing with sealed surface and

			drainage to intercept field run off. VoG CC has committed 45k to the scheme during 21/22
2	Gileston – Pools	8813	Walls Pool - Gileston: Provision of 35 metres of boardwalk to overcome muddy section caused by wet ground.
3	St Donats Realignment	3500	St Donats Realignment: Realign path to follow walked line
4	Summerhouse	2500	Undercutting of path now means rollback is essential, landowner difficulties previously encountered
5	Nash Point boardwalk	3375	Nash Point (East) Boardwalk: Provision of 15m of boardwalk to improve muddy section of path
6	Porthkerry boardwalk	10500	Reserve Project (Porthkerry)- Purchase of materials for provision of 60m of boardwalk
7	Monknash	29531	Improvement of culvert, surrounds and access route to coast path and culvert. Project is associated with legal agreement concluded in 2017-18 and will address storm damage of path when under previous permissive arrangement, flooding of path via access route. Improvement work should be planned to commence in Q3 or 21-22 in order to take account of weather and peak tourist season. Work to secure necessary authorities, amend design and procure during 20/21.
8	Bulwarks	10594	Very slippery on gradient up and down slope - stepped access with handrail. Design and authorities will be during 19-20 (scheduled monument), works on ground will be 20-21. We've examined the site with the CADW officer and on the basis of his advice have had an archaeological assessment undertaken, which was returned around Christmas 19/20. We anticipate that this will allow us to proceed with a scheme under a watching brief. We've thus far discussed providing a raised path that is secured into the ground though this will be subject to advice from drainage engineers and a SUDS application.
9	Tresilian (2 year project)	1000	Section of path lost due to cliff fall in previous years and informal diversion provided around it. Landowner has indicated intention to close informal route and so now need to ensure legal alignment is protected. The compensation amount is speculative based on land value and calculable loss. If the owner carries through with his threats to close the path this will become an order rather than agreement and compensation rate may vary at that point
Maintenance	Maintenance	19550	Maintenance of the Wales Coast Path

AGREED – T H A T the report be noted.

(i) NRW Access Reform Advice: Briefing Update –

Mr. Teague stated that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) were providing advice to Welsh Government about three Group 1 reform areas within their Access Reform Programme. This would involve internal and external stakeholders to input to the advice through liaison and consultative groups. The final advice was due to be provided to Welsh Government by the end of March 2022.

The Access Reform Programme consisted of proposals to revise access legislation. Following its 2017 consultation about the reforms, Government grouped the proposals as follows:

- Group 1 – reform proposals that were considered uncontroversial by stakeholders
- Group 2 – reform proposals requiring more detailed consideration and advice
- Group 3 – reform proposals related to access to inland waters (not considered within this briefing)

For 2021/22, Welsh Government had asked NRW to deliver advice about the following Group 1 legislative reforms:

- Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW Act) open access mapping reviews
- Local access forum (LAF) roles and responsibilities
- Enforcement of dogs on leads

AGREED – T H A T the update be noted.

(j) Sustainable Farming Scheme Design –

Mr. Teague provided an overview of Welsh Government's Sustainable Farming Scheme, which was intended to support farmers to become world leaders in sustainable food production.

The scheme would help farmers to thrive by producing sustainable food in a way that delivered several Sustainable Land Management (SLM) outcomes, each with economic, environmental and social benefits. Enhanced access and engagement were an important outcome of the scheme.

It was outlined that Farmers would to meet all their legal obligations for maintaining and clearing Rights of Way (RoW) to claim a sustainable farming payment. Ensuring compliance with this obligation could include using established local authority schemes that enabled recreational users to report issues. As over two thirds of RoW were on farmland, enhancing existing RoW, beyond the legal requirements, was a way for farmers to contribute further to Wales' health and prosperity, while also providing greater access to the culture and heritage of rural areas. The scheme would support farmers to:

- upgrade footpaths to multi-use paths (only 21% of RoW is accessible to cyclists and horse riders)
- enhance existing paths through surface and furniture improvements, drainage, footbridges, signs etc. to make them more accessible
- establish joined-up and new access routes and trails
- establish new access, based on priorities set out in the local Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

The aim of the scheme was to increase the proportion of RoW that was open, easy to use and well signed. Payment could include reimbursement for any cost of upgrades, for example, converting from stiles to gates, labour for installing them or the use of contractors.

Mr F. Coleman stated that local authorities must contribute less than 1/4 of the expenses reasonably incurred when land owners were looking after their footpaths. He asked whether it was correct to say that the Vale was likely to go above and beyond that in providing all sorts of infrastructure. In reply, Mr. Teague advised that this was part of the Highways act, which meant that usually local authorities would either provide between 25 and 100% of the costs. This would be carried out on behalf land owners, who would retain liability and responsibility for those structures. In practice and for the Vale, depending on what work was required, then the Council would generally provide a lot more than that 25%. Usually, the Council would provide the materials for landowners to install themselves, or where necessary the Council would carry out the installation.

Mr. F. Coleman then referred to the business of upgrading the paths to multi-use, which also applied to the EnRAW and Green trails work being undertaken. Mr. Coleman queried whether this created a conflict between the different types of users, the pace of different users and the business of wear and tear, for example with horses and cyclists as well as walkers using the same paths. Mr. Coleman stated that this was an issue that seemed to have been glossed over. He asked how was the need to avoid conflict between different users being addressed. In response, Mr. Teague stated that in relation to the Sustainable Farming Scheme, then that was probably something to highlight to Welsh Government. In terms of the projects undertaken by the Council, the PROW Team had been out to undertake survey work. So where possible, the Council had tried to ensure that the routes selected were of such a character that they could handle the right bridal traffic. Where routes were not appropriate then those sections would be identified as needing surface improvements.

The Forum was keen for conflict between different types of users to be sent as feedback as part of the consultation process. The Forum also wished to flag up the suggestion for a standard to be incorporated around paying farmers to help keep RoW routes maintained. In addition, the Forum wanted to highlight the importance of an exit strategy to be devised for when funding came to end, as there was nothing which stopped landowner from removing access rights when funding ceased.

AGREED – T H A T the views of the Local Access Forum by passed on for further consideration.