

VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 9th April, 2025.

Present: I.A.N. Perry (Chair); W.A. Hennessy (Vice-Chair); S. Campbell, I. Fraser, G. Thomas and Councillor E. Williams.

Also present: G. Davies (Secretary), D. Hunt and A. Briscoe (Vale of Glamorgan Council)

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from J. Cole, S. Gaffney, K. Lucas, S. McMillan and P. Walsh.

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 24th July, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

(c) LAF Membership –

G. Davies (Secretary) advised the Forum that recently I. Buckley and F. Coleman had tendered their resignations. The Forum expressed its wish to thank both for their contributions, particularly F. Coleman who had sat on the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum since inception in 2003.

G. Davies also advised the Forum that a new Forum would need to be reconstituted from November of this year so a recruitment exercise would be undertaken beforehand.

(d) Overview of Achievements – Public Rights of Way Team –

The Countryside Access Manager advised the Forum of the invaluable work and contributions made by all the volunteers who assisted the Public Rights of Way Team in maintaining the network.

In terms of the Coastal Access Improvement programme, D. Hunt (Countryside Access Manager) advised that over the past year, over 550 pieces of furniture had been installed, which included 11 footbridges and over 260 metal gates of various types. For a small team that was a considerable achievement which should also provide long lasting improvements for the accessibility of the network.

Furthermore, 15 2 in 1 gates had been installed alongside 69 pedestrian gates, 180 kissing gates, 12 bridges, over 200 field posts and almost 50 roadside posts. Also improvements also included were some one off schemes for resurfacing, drainage, concrete steps and the repairing of boardwalks. The Countryside Access Manager

offered thanks and appreciation for the efforts and hard works to the Ranger Team which carried out the majority of the improvement works. It was also important to recognise that through their contacts with landowners, the range of the improvement works had been expanded.

The Countryside Access Manager referred to ongoing work with Natural Resources Wales via grant money provided through Welsh Government, which included schemes such as the rollback of the Coastal path at Lavernock Point plus a re-diversion of the path at St. Donats. In terms of coastal access improvements, which will mainly for the Wales coast path, there was the annual vegetation cutbacks and clearance plus any other improvement works that were identified along the way. From last year's Coastal Access Improvement Grant, the Council was able to install another three foot bridges and various way marking post and kissing gate improvements. Rights of Way Officers were due to meet with the Welsh Government Officer over the next couple of weeks to walk through and show them the works that had been completed.

Other notable achievements included various improvement works and permissive rights of the ways in Randall Woods and Cross Common and Dinas Powys, for example with over 8 kilometres of new bridal way access granted via permissive agreements with private land owners and over a kilometre of path resurfaced which included the reopening and clearance of blocked and lost routes. 36 new access gates had been installed and more than 20 existing gates repaired. 50 new way marking post erected and various new horse warning signs put up by the Highways Department. In addition, over 700 metres of new hedgerows had been laid and several hundred new trees planted and new lengths of native hedgerow. A new footbridge had been installed at Cwm Mawr as it was deemed necessary for the old wooden boardwalks to be replaced by plastic ones which had a predicted lifespan of over 20 years.

The Countryside Access Manager further advised that it was important to note that the current grant funding from Natural Resources Wales was due to expire next year and end by March 2026. Therefore discussions with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales were ongoing in terms of maintenance grants.

I. Fraser queried whether there had been any update in relation to new legislation around giving bicycles more access to rights of ways. In reply, the Countryside Access Manager advised that he had not been advised of anything but would follow it up with Natural Resources Wales.

The Forum noted that the enforcement and the use of e-scooters on the coastal path was the responsibility of the Police.

(e) Observations of the Network by Members of the Local Access Forum –

G. Davies (Secretary) introduced the item stating that it would be a good opportunity for members of the Local Access Forum to provide some of their observations of the Rights of Way network across the Vale of Glamorgan.

I. Fraser congratulated the team for the installation of kissing gates and he stated that he had received lots of positive feedback on the condition of the paths from walkers that he met along certain routes.

Councillor E. Williams referred to the local Llantwit Major Footpath Forum which had commented on the excellent surface on the Cwm Mawr section of the path.

The Chair, I. Perry, queried whether there was any update in relation to the development of a new app for mobile phones. In reply, D. Hunt stated that there had not been any issues reported in relation to the app which was working as expected.

I. Perry, Chair, stated that the Millenium Heritage Trail around St. Nicholas and Bonvilston had been severely affected by rain and flooding and he asked whether that could be looked into. In addition, in the area of Bonvilston there was still the issue of fields containing paths being ploughed over which made it difficult for walkers.

In closing the item, D. Hunt thanked the members for their observations and the feedback would be taken back and actioned.