VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 4th June, 2026

Present: H. Allaway, I. Fraser, K. Hansen, P. Hawkins, S. James, K. Lucas, D. Shields, G. Thomas, F. Waters and Councillor E. Williams.

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

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from M. Elias Jones, W. Fear, J. Lovell, S. McMillan and P. Walsh.

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Introduction by Members –

Members introduced themselves, outlining their backgrounds, skills, and interests. Key areas of expertise represented included:

- Rights of way maintenance and volunteer co-ordination (Valeways, Ramblers);
- Public engagement and community liaison;
- Walking, running, and outdoor recreation promotion;
- Equestrian access and bridleway advocacy;
- Communications (NHS/public health context);
- Finance and governance;
- Local knowledge and long-term residency.

A written statement from Joselle Lovell highlighted:

- Over 20 years' experience in community development and inclusion;
- Strategic leadership in inclusive services;
- Active involvement in equestrian access (SAFE Bridleway Group);
- Commitment to balancing public access with land management interests.

AGREED – T H A T it be noted that the Forum had a broad and diverse skills base across access, recreation, and community engagement.

(d) Terms of Reference –

The Terms of Reference (ToR), originally agreed in 2022, were presented.

Key Points:
The Forum's role was advisory, providing guidance on improving public access to land for recreation.

Advice must balance:
- Environmental;
- Economic;
- Social and land management interests.

Core Functions:
- Support implementation of access rights (including coastal access);
- Improve rights of way networks;
- Contribute to access and recreation strategies.

Operating Principles:
- Inclusive and constructive approach;
- Work within national guidance;
- Seek consensus where possible;
- Clearly present differing views where consensus cannot be reached.

Membership:
- Balanced representation of interests;
- 10–15 members;
- Requirement for relevant knowledge and commitment.

Meetings:
- Minimum twice yearly (typically 2–3 meetings);
- Additional site visits to review network developments.

Subsequently, it was

AGREED – T H A T the Terms of Reference be accepted and carried forward for the next three-year period.

(e) Introduction to the Rights of Way Team –

D. Hunt (Countryside Access Manager) provided an overview of the Rights of Way Team, which also covered information for the following Agenda item – Rights of Way in the Vale of Glamorgan.

As an overview, D. Hunt advised that the Team consisted of 3 officers managing the Vale's extensive network and it was guided by the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

Key Responsibilities included:

- Path maintenance (surface, vegetation clearance);
- Replacement of structures (e.g. stiles, gates);
- Maintaining the Definitive Map and Statement;
- Legal processes (diversions, modifications, public inquiries);
- Enforcement of obstructions.

In terms of the maintenance framework for maintaining the network, there was a priority system rated from 1 to 6. Priority 1 represented a safety risk and lower priorities were related to signage and waymarking. Promoted routes received higher prioritisation and there was a heavy reliance on volunteer groups for lower-priority work.

Regarding funding, the core budget was limited, with grant funding from Natural Resources Wales or Welsh Government critical. Typically rights of way or access projects were 75% funded with 25% match required from the Council. Coastal path rollback was often fully funded.

The Access Improvement Grant was used for gates, surfacing, boardwalks.

Moving onto stakeholder engagement, D. Hunt outlined that the Council had strong partnerships with many external organisations such as Valeways, the Ramblers Association and the British Horse Society (BHS). Volunteer surveys supported network condition monitoring.

The key challenges for the Rights of Way Team included:

- Limited resources vs large network;
- Reliance on external grants; and the
- Need to prioritise strictly if funding reduced.

A range of points were discussed by the Forum such as:

- Access & Land Management – Managing increased recreational use, impact of organised events on farmland and the importance of communication with landowners;
- Liability & Insurance – Organised groups typically carried insurance and individuals participated at their own risk. Risk assessments were essential for organised activities;
- Permissive Paths – Landowners may withdraw access, formal agreements could secure longer-term access and it was possible for informal routes becoming formal rights of way over time;
- Coastal Path Issues – Path loss due to erosion was common, use of “rollback” agreements with landowners and legal creation orders possible but complex and costly;
- Strategic Role of the Forum – Emphasis was placed on on strategic advisory role, not operational or complaints-based. Importance of evidence-based recommendations.

AGREED – T H A T it be noted that the Local Access Forum was a valued a platform for constructive dialogue.

(f) Rights of Way in the Vale of Glamorgan –

An overview of Rights of Way in the Vale of Glamorgan was provided within the previous Agenda Item.

(g) Procedure for Claiming Expenses –

The Secretary advised that Members may claim travel expenses at 45p per mile, although there was a potential increase to 55p pending review

Claims must be submitted within 3 months and required submission via official process (bank details handled separately).

(h) Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair –

The Secretary outlined the process for the selection of Chair and Vice-Chair, as per the information provided within the agenda papers.

It was noted that the appointments must take place at the next meeting via secret ballot if there were more than one nomination.

For the position of Chair, during the meeting there was one nomination received from P. Hawkins. Further nominations were to be submitted via email to Secretary by 5.00 p.m., 6th July 2026.

(i) Agenda for Local Access Forum Meeting – Tuesday, 14th July, 2026 at 5.00 p.m. –

The Secretary outlined the proposed agenda items for the next Local Access Forum meeting on 14th July, 2026, as follows:

1. Appointment of Chair.
2. Appointment of Vice-Chair.
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting.
4. Apologies for Absence.
5. Role and work of the Rights of Way/Countryside Access Team.
6. Overview of rights of way financial grants.
7. Rights of Way Improvement Plans - Objectives
8. Definitive Map – overview.
9. Legal Modification Orders – overview.
10. Survey of the network – process for reporting issues

Members were invited to propose additional items and advise the Secretary via email.