

VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 14th July, 2026

Present: H. Allaway, I. Fraser, K. Hansen, P. Hawkins, K. Lucas, D. Shields, G. Thomas, S. McMillan, P. Walsh and F. Waters

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

(a) Appointment of Chair –

One nomination had been received for the position of Chair, that being from P. Hawkins. There being no other nominations, it was

AGREED - T H A T P. Hawkins be appointed Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum until 4th June, 2029 or such lesser period as the Forum might subsequently determine.

(b) Appointment of Vice-Chair –

One nomination had been received for the position of Vice-Chair, that being from J. Lovell. There being no other nominations, it was

AGREED - T H A T J. Lovell be appointed Vice-Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum until 4th June, 2029 or such lesser period as the Forum might subsequently determine.

(c) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from S. James, M. Elias Jones, J. Lovell and Councillor E. Williams

(d) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 4th June, 2026 be approved as a correct record.

(e) Overview of Rights of Way Financial Grants –

D. Hunt (Countryside Access Manager) provided a presentation covering rights of way funding streams and current projects.

Members of the Forum noted that Rights of Way and countryside access improvements were heavily dependent on Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) grant funding.

Principal funding streams included:

- Coastal Access Grant;
- NRW Strategic and Competitive Grant Funding;
- Access Improvement Grant (AIG).

D. Hunt outlined that the AIG was initially established as a three-year capital programme and was aligned to Rights of Way Improvement Plans. Funding had enabled significant infrastructure improvements across the Vale of Glamorgan including gates, bridges, waymarking and surfacing works.

It was advised that without external grant support, the Council's ability to undertake improvement works would be severely restricted due to limited core budgets.

Members of the Forum raised questions regarding:

- How projects and maintenance priorities were determined;
- The grading system used for reported issues;
- The size and nature of the maintenance backlog;
- Future availability of grant funding; and
- Volunteer contributions and partnership working.

In reply, Officers advised that:

- Issues were prioritised using an established grading system ranging from urgent safety risks to lower-priority maintenance matters.
- Most reports originated from members of the public and user groups.
- Current funding was secured until March 2027, although future Welsh Government allocations remained uncertain.
- Significant volunteer contributions continued to support the network

Subsequently, it was

AGREED – T H A T Officers to provide a future summary of network condition and maintenance backlog information for Forum Members.

(f) Rights of Way Improvement Plan – Objectives. –

The Forum received an overview of the Vale of Glamorgan Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2024-2034).

Key objectives included:

- Maintaining and improving network accessibility;

- Improving access for under-represented groups and people with mobility impairments;
- Enhancing connectivity between communities;
- Supporting health and wellbeing through access opportunities;
- Protecting biodiversity and landscape interests;
- Improving awareness and promotion of the network.

AGREED – T H A T the weblink to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan to be circulated to all Forum Members.

(g) Definitive Map – Overview –

Members received a presentation on:

- The purpose of the Definitive Map and Statement;
- Relevant legislation;
- The legal status of public rights of way records;
- Processes for recording and amending public rights of way.

Discussion covered:

- Access to Definitive Statements;
- Historic rights of way;
- Definitive Map Modification Orders;
- The former "Lost Ways" initiative; and
- Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic.

Officers explained that:

- The Definitive Map was the Council's legal record of public rights of way;
- Changes required statutory legal processes; and
- A future consolidation of the Definitive Map was anticipated.

(h) Legal Modification Orders – Overview –

S. Thomas (Public Rights of Way Assistant) provided an overview of:

- Definitive Map Modification Orders;
- Public Path Orders;
- Diversions, extinguishments and creation orders;
- Consultation requirements;
- The role of the Public Rights of Way Sub-Committee and Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW).

AGREED – T H A T the complexity and length of the legal processes involved be noted.

(i) Survey of the Network – Process for Reporting Issues. –

Officers reported that:

- The Vale of Glamorgan had approximately 600 kilometres of public rights of way.
- Annual performance surveys continued despite the former national performance regime ending.
- Survey results help identify maintenance priorities and populate the infrastructure database.
- A significant increase in volunteer surveyors had been achieved during the current survey year.

The Forum discussed:

- Digital reporting opportunities;
- GIS mapping;
- Use of tablets and location technologies; and
- Potential future use of artificial intelligence and data analysis tools.

AGREED – T H A T the Forum expresses its appreciation to volunteers for undertaking network surveys.

(j) Date of next meeting. –

Members discussed potential future agenda items, including:

- Disability access;
- Crime and anti-social behaviour impacts on countryside access;
- National Forest developments;
- Volunteer activity updates;
- Natural Resources Wales updates;
- Active Travel initiatives;
- Bridleway development and maintenance;
- Development of a Wellbeing Strategy;
- Proactive engagement with landowners.

Members were invited to propose additional items and advise the Secretary via email and Officers encouraged Forum Members to submit suggestions for future agenda items.

Officers agreed to prepare briefing information regarding the proposed Wellbeing Strategy and circulate to Forum Members.

AGREED – T H A T the next meeting of the Local Access Forum be held on 22nd October 2026 at 5.00pm at the Civic Offices, Barry.