

SCRUTINY - REPORT FOR INFORMATION

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) - First annual review

This document provides a summary of progress made over the past 12 months against the action points and targets set out in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) for 2025 – 2026.

In line with statutory requirements, annual progress updates are reported to both the Local Access Forum (LAF) and the Council's Forward Work Programme.

Over the past year, officers within the Department of Sustainable Development have worked to deliver the agreed actions, subject to available resources. The attached update outlines progress made across short, medium, and long-term objectives, as defined in the ROWIP.

It is important to note that while significant improvements have been achieved yet again, particularly in enhancing accessibility, these results have only been made possible through access to exceptional external grant funding opportunities. These funding streams have enabled delivery well beyond our typical annual capacity. However, it should be noted that without continued external support, the scale of improvements seen this year is unlikely to be sustainable in future years.

The attached document provides a detailed breakdown of each action point, associated targets, and the progress achieved for 2025 - 26 shown in the far-right hand column.

MANAGEMENT

LEGAL WORK

Aims:

- To ensure public rights are recorded correctly and in a timely manner
- To administer changes to the network using appropriate legal mechanisms
- To protect and assert public rights

Key:

Short - 1 to 3 years
Medium - 3 to 5 years
Long - 5 years +



Action	Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months
1	Continuous	DMMO's completed (#)	6 DMMO's registered and in the system for progression. Nothing concluded at this time.
		DMMO's determined within 12 months (%)	unable to achieve due to available resources
		LEMO's completed (%)	13 currently in the system to process
		Definitive Map republication	yet to start due to staff resources - unable to undertake any preparation
2	Short	Adoption of scheme	To be drafted and presented to new LAF members for consideration
3	Long	Anomaly statement agreed Anomaly list completed (%)	Anomaly list complete List reviewed and pockets of anomalies have been identified. 7 PPO's are in the early stage of progression – no change Proposed priority grading statement to be drafted
4	Continuous	PPOs completed ()	1 application received within the timeframe of this review. 7 completed
5	Medium	Application packs reviewed and published (#)	PPO application pack under review DMMO application pack under review Highways Act 1980 s.147 under review Highways Act 1980 s.147ZA and s130a to be drafted
6	Short	Compliance with regulations Approach for logging limitations agreed	following existing legislation guidance and reviewing other LA's templates to ensure best fit for the Vale. Draft to be submitted to the new LAF.
7	Continuous	s106 schemes delivered (#)	no funding made available from S.106 during this period. In constant discussions with S106 officer to horizon scan for future funding opportunities
8	Continuous	Enforcement resolution rate (%) Seasonal enforcement compliance rate (%)	100% - No outstanding issues to report for this period. Pre-emptive letter reminders sent to landowners to remind of obligations prior to crop season. Letters sent periodically for enforcement of obstructions.
		s130 resolution rate (%)	N/A - no application served against the Council
9	Medium	Customer satisfaction survey Publications (#)	Customer satisfaction survey to be adopted from existing country parks
10	Long	Issue papers presented to LAF (#)	Procedure in place to ensure PROW Team are aware of legislative changes.

MAINTENANCE	
Aims: - To maintain the Vale's Public Rights of Way network in a condition suitable for the intended type and level of use. - To maintain appropriate datasets for the management of maintenance activities and customer contact. - To improve information available on the Vale's approach to maintenance activities	Key: Short - 1 to 3 years Medium - 3 to 5 years Long - 5 years +

Action		Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months
11	Maintain & improve the network having regard to ROWIP prioritisation guidelines and to protocols included in relevant published guidance.	Continuous	Maintenance resolution rate (%) Grant programmes delivered (#)	several grant programs completed including Wales Coast Path (WCP) maintenance and Access Improvement Grant (AIG) externally funded schemes – ongoing annually
12	Develop guidance describing typical network maintenance issues including protocols for remedies	Medium	Customer satisfaction survey Publications (#)	Customer satisfaction survey to be adapted from existing country parks
13	Promote least restrictive access principles and agree new furniture to BS5709 standard	Continuous	Furniture accessibility improvements (#)	In total have installed 93 new gates, 3 new footbridges and 2 refurbishments. <i>Please note: we have done in excess of what we would normally achieve due to external grant funding. This will not be sustained in such numbers for future years without continued financial support from external grant funding.</i>
14	Make use of appropriate ICT innovations, including spatial datasets, for ongoing maintenance management.	Continuous	Internal appraisal	external consultant carried out whole network condition survey to feed into our GIS system. New tablets purchased to help map and record ROW issues by officers whilst in the field.
15	Carry out an annual clearance programme for priority routes and review the programme annually.	Continuous	Paths cleared (km)	In excess of 100km of clearance carried out including inland and coastal vegetation cuts (twice a year) – ongoing annually.
16	Carry out a survey each year of that provides data on network condition and ease of use of paths *	Continuous	Proportion of network surveyed (%) Ease of use data (%)	100% - data from condition survey conducted this year. Will return to PI methodology in 2026-27.
17	Support public access along the Wales Coast Path including assuring continuity in the light of erosion events or potential erosion events..	Continuous	Wales Coast Path condition survey indicators	annual survey and monies for maintenance (see point 11)
			Grant programmes delivered (#)	Various grant funded schemes delivered this year - Wales Coast Path (WCP) maintenance & improvements, Access Improvement Grant (AIG), Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) grant for Great Glamorgan Way and SPF for infrastructure Improvements have now finished – grant ended in March 2026.

RESOURCING

Aims:

- To harness enough resources – financial and manpower – to enable high quality maintenance and improvements.
- To raise awareness of the ROWIP to generate support for its implementation

Key:

Short - 1 to 3 years
Medium - 3 to 5 years
Long - 5 years +

Action		Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months															
18	Extend partnership working with community councils and user groups.	Long	Community Councils regularly engaged (#)	The 2 existing footpath forums are hosted by Llantwit Major and Cowbridge which both meet quarterly. These forums currently allow us to engage with up to 8 different Community Councils..															
			User groups regularly engaged (#) Volunteer programmes supported (#)	2 volunteer groups regularly engaged to carry out work on the network. Country Park areas have additional volunteer groups engage occasionally.															
19	Take advantage of funding and income generation opportunities to enable	Continuous	Grants awarded (# and £)	<table><tr><td>Grant / Year:</td><td>2025-26</td><td>2026-27</td></tr><tr><td>WCP maintenance</td><td>£23k</td><td>£23k</td></tr><tr><td>WCP improvements</td><td>£28k</td><td>£40k</td></tr><tr><td>AIG</td><td>£63k</td><td>£63k</td></tr><tr><td>SPF (GGW)</td><td>£148k</td><td>£0</td></tr></table>	Grant / Year:	2025-26	2026-27	WCP maintenance	£23k	£23k	WCP improvements	£28k	£40k	AIG	£63k	£63k	SPF (GGW)	£148k	£0
	Grant / Year:		2025-26	2026-27															
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WCP improvements	£28k	£40k																	
AIG	£63k	£63k																	
SPF (GGW)	£148k	£0																	
	implementation of the ROWIP		Income programmes developed (#)	Existing pricing structure in place for memorial benches / gates etc.. Benchmarking with other LA's to identify other income streams															
20	Identify specific staffing needs to implement the ROWIP	Short	Staff supported (#)	Ongoing review to identify resource issues has highlighted the need for addition staff to review the Definitive Map and to progress the DMMO`s and annomilies.															
21	Explore interdepartmental working opportunites	Short	Feasibility undertaken (#)	we continue to work with other teams / departments within our directorate for the benefit of the network															

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Aim:

- To support the involvement of volunteers and stakeholders in the management and improvement of the network.

Key:

Short - 1 to 3 years
Medium - 3 to 5 years
Long - 5 years +

Action	Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months
22	Continuous	Organisations/programm es supported (#) Training courses run (#)	Our annual path survey has seen an increased uptake with 23 new volunteers, some of whom returned from previous years. Officers have held 5 new training sessions to ensure consistent standards are met and to ensure safety of the volunteers whilst they are undertaking site work.
23	Continuous	Community Councils regularly engaged (#) User groups regularly engaged (#)	(see 18) existing footpath forum meets quarterly
24	Continuous	Annual progress reporting	annual publication of results for review.
25	Short	Strategy published	strategy to be developed now that a newly formed LAF membership has been established.

STAKEHOLDERS

THE RANGE OF USERS

Aims:

To ensure that the Vale has a network which is welcoming to and fit for all different types of users.
To implement the principle of least restrictive access wherever practicable.

Key:

Short - 1 to 3 years
Medium - 3 to 5 years
Long - 5 years +

Action	Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months
26	Continuous	Furniture accessibility improvements (#)	No longer provide stiles or wooden furniture kits from choice - already installed 93 new metal gates to improve accessibility
27	Medium	Trail length complete (km) Green Trails project specific indicators	Waymarking and access improvements to over 10km of multi-user route, as well as the creation of new off-road routes through private land and NRW estate to create longer-distance promoted routes – GGW project has now ended as of March 2026.
28	Long	Strategy published	working towards draft document
29	Medium	Active Travel collaborations (#) Green Trails project specific indicators	Partnered with Cycling UK on the GGW Project, as well as local cyclist groups – until the project ended in March 2026
30	Medium	Green Trails project specific indicators	The previous GGW Project worked well with BHS and local equestrian groups / individual riders across the Vale to understand the difficulties in riding safely through the countryside. Continue to collaborate with the Highway Authority to investigate and action road safety for vulnerable users.
31	Long	Strategy published	identified key partners - strategy to be drafted
32	Continuous	Grants awarded (# and £) Customer satisfaction survey	3 competitive grants awarded from NRW including strategic maintenance of the Wales Coast Path (WCP), competitive bids for improvements along the WCP and the final year of ongoing AIG funding. Worked with Welsh Government to help establish the new 'Llwyber Coedwig' – National Forest Trail for Wales, as the Vale has an important start/finish section at Porthkerry country park and was used as the official launch location.

LANDOWNERS AND OCCUPIERS**Aim:**

- A network which meets the needs of its users, whilst minimising the impacts on landowners and occupiers.

Key:

Short - 1 to 3 years
Medium - 3 to 5 years
Long - 5 years +

Action		Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months
33	Establish better liaison with landowners and representatives to ensure best practice, sharing of information and practical management advice.	Long	Strategy published Regular engagements established	identified key partners - strategy to be drafted
34	Work with landowners to investigate a more coherent network of routes especially for horse riders	Short	Green Trails project specific indicators	Over 8km of new bridleway created by permissive agreements on private land through GGW project which has now finished.

INTEREST BODIES**Aims:**

- To increase the number and range of potential partners.
- To build relationships with external bodies that can contribute to improving and maintaining the network.

Key:

Short - 1 to 3 years
Medium - 3 to 5 years
Long - 5 years +

Action		Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months
35	Improve partnership working with Community Councils.	Long	Community Councils regularly engaged (#) Collaborative projects delivered (#)	(see 18) existing forums meet quarterly
36	Extend partnership working with neighbouring Authorities, in particular with regard to area statements and the management of natural resources.	Short	Collaborations supported (#)	GGW project has now ended as the grant funding expired in March 2026. Worked with Welsh Government to help establish the new 'Llwyber Coedwig' – National Forest Trail for Wales, as the Vale has an important start/finish section at Porthkerry country park and was used as the official launch location.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION

OFF-SITE

Aims:

- To create and maintain an up-to-date information resource about the network which is available to all stakeholders, especially current and potential users.

Key:

Short - 1 to 3 years
Medium - 3 to 5 years
Long - 5 years +

Action	Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months
37 Circulate promotional material according to available resources	Continuous	Publications (#) Strategy published	strategy document to be drafted – not started
38 Improve information available on the Council website, including legislation and PROW management.	Short	Customer satisfaction survey Strategy published	Customer satisfaction survey to be adopted from existing country parks – not started
39 Maintain a working map and publish via web mapping	Continuous	Customer satisfaction survey	Customer satisfaction survey to be adopted from existing country parks – not started
40 Work with LAF to develop criteria for endorsement of promoted routes	Medium	Route standards published	criteria to be developed after discussion with new LAF membership- started in June 2026.
41 Create promotional material specifically for less able users	Medium	Publications (#)	no longer support printed publications - online or PDF only due to cost and sustainability

ON-SITE

Aims:

- To ensure that all users have the information they need to enjoy the network and use it responsibly

Key:

Short - 1 to 3 years
Medium - 3 to 5 years
Long - 5 years +

Action	Timescale	Indicators	Progress made last 12 months
42 Improve roadside signage	Medium	Posts in place (%)	50 new roadside waymarker posts
43 Maintain interpretation resources at appropriate locations*.	Long	Maintenance resolution rate (%)	not calculated – started to discuss potential for QR code at points of historic interest.
44 Provide training and review system for waymarking using volunteers	Short	Training courses run (#) Organisations/programs supported (#)	various volunteer training include valeways, ramblers etc.. – we now carryout monthly practical workshops with volunteer groups to ensure they have knowledge for correct and safe furniture installation techniques