

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) which is a 10 year document, 2025 – 2035.

The ROWIP was formally adopted at the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 September 2024 and subsequently published on the Council's website for public access in March 2025. 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, 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, 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 to date 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 Continuously review the Definitive Map and Statement	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 (%)	nothing currently in the system to process
		Definitive Map republication	yet to start, due to staff resources - unable to undertake any preparation
2 Develop a prioritisation scheme for the determination of definitive map Nodification order applications	Short	Adoption of scheme	taken guidance from existing example schemes of other LA's - to draft and present to LAF at next meeting.
3 Develop and implement an approach to address catalogued anomalies	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 . Proposed priority grading statement to be drafted
4 Administer public path order applications in a timely manner	Continuous	PPOs completed ()	12 applications received within the timeframe of this review. 0 completed due to resources
5 Review guidance within application packs associated with changing and recording	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 Improve registers of applications and processes for recording limitations	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 LAF in 2026
7 Take opportunities to improve the PROW network including via s106 contributions associated with development.	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 Protect the network having regard to proportionality and protocols included in relevant published guidance.	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 enforcment of obstructions.
		s130 resolution rate (%)	No S.130 served against the Council
9 Develop guidance describing typical network protection issues and protocols for remedies*	Medium	Customer satisfaction survey Publications (#)	Customer satisfaction survey to be adopted from existintg country parks
10 Adapt procedures to account for changes in statute	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	Continuous	Maintenance resolution rate (%) Grant programmes delivered (#)	several grant programs completed including our annual Wales Coast Path (WCP) maintenance & improvements and our Access Improvement Grant (AIG) schemes
12	Medium	Customer satisfaction survey Publications (#)	Customer satisfaction survey to be adapted from existing country parks
13	Continuous	Furniture accessibility improvements (#)	In total have installed 237 new gates and 7 new footbridges . Please note: we have done far in excess last year of what we would normally achieve due to external grant funding. This will not be sustained in such numbers for future years without grant funding.
14	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	Continuous	Paths cleared (km)	In excess of 100km of clearance carried out including inland and coastal vegetation cuts (twice a year)
16	Continuous	Proportion of network surveyed (%) Ease of use data (%)	100% - data from condition survey undertaken this year. Will return to PI methodology in future years
17	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

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	Long	Community Councils regularly engaged (#)	Existing forums meet quarterly. Currently engaging with 8 Community Councils, discussions under way to setup another with Dinas Powis Community Council.																		
		User groups regularly engaged (#) Volunteer programmes supported (#)	6 volunteer groups regularly engaged with to carry out work on the network. Supported over 120 volunteer programmes with organisations such as ValeWays, Restore the Thaw, Local Nature Partnership, National Trust and BHS etc.																		
19	Continuous	Grants awarded (# and £)	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grant / Year:</th> <th>2024/25</th> <th>2025/26</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>WCP maintenance</td> <td>£22k</td> <td>£23k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WCP improvements</td> <td>£33k</td> <td>£28k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AIG</td> <td>£61k</td> <td>£63k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SPF (GGW)</td> <td>£195k</td> <td>£148k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SPF infrastructure</td> <td>£233k</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grant / Year:	2024/25	2025/26	WCP maintenance	£22k	£23k	WCP improvements	£33k	£28k	AIG	£61k	£63k	SPF (GGW)	£195k	£148k	SPF infrastructure	£233k	
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Income programmes developed (#)	Existing pricing structure in place for memorial benches / gates etc.. Benchmarking with other LA's to identify other income streams																				
20	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 anomalies.																		
21	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/programmes supported (#) Training courses run (#)	120 programmes supported - volunteers include: valeways, ramblers, BHS etc... 4 training sessions given to develop waymarking skills and furniture installment methodology.
23	Continuous	Community Councils regularly engaged (#) User groups regularly engaged (#)	(see 18) existing forum meets quarterly and we have setup another community group recently
24	Continuous	Annual progress reporting	First annual publication of results for review.
25	Short	Strategy published	strategy to be developed when new LAF membership formed

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 172 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
28	Long	Strategy published	working towards draft document
29	Medium	Active Travel collaborations (#) Green Trails project specific indicators	Partnering with Cycling UK on the GGW Project, as well as listening to local cyclist groups
30	Medium	Green Trails project specific indicators	Partnering with the British Horse Society (BHS) on the GGW Project as well as engaging with local equestrian groups and individual riders across the Vale to understand the difficulties in riding safely through the countryside. Collaborating 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	2 competitive grants awarded from NRW including strategic maintenance of the Wales Coast Path (WCP) and a 2 year Access Improvement Grant (AIG) scheme.

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	Long	Strategy published Regular engagements established	identified key partners - strategy to be drafted
34	Short	Green Trails project specific indicators	Over 8km of new bridleway created by permissive agreements on private land. Waymarking and access improvements to existing bridleways and byways to create coherent routes.

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	Long	Community Councils regularly engaged (#) Collaborative projects delivered (#)	(see 18) existing forum meets quarterly and we have setup another community group recently
36	Short	Collaborations supported (#)	GGW Project continues to work as a collaboration in the South-Central Region to develop a coherent network of inter-county multi-user routes and green infrastructure improvements. The project is led by the Vale in partnership with Cardiff CC, BCBC, RCTBC and MTCBC neighbouring LA's and discussion have taken place to find funding to continue the project (existing grant funding ends this financial year).

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	Continuous	Publications (#) Strategy published	strategy document to be drafted
38	Short	Customer satisfaction survey Strategy published	Customer satisfaction survey to be adopted from existing country parks
39	Continuous	Customer satisfaction survey	Customer satisfaction survey to be adopted from existing country parks
40	Medium	Route standards published	criteria to be developed after discussion with new LAF membership
41	Medium	Publications (#)	no longer support printed publications - online or PDF only due to 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	Medium	Posts in place (%)	55 new roadside waymarker posts
43	Long	Maintenance resolution rate (%)	not calculated
44	Short	Training courses run (#) Organisations/programmes supported (#)	various volunteer training include valeways, rambles etc..