

RHONDDA CYNON TAFF LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

Forward written by LAF Chairperson

During meetings held since the last annual report, there have been many meaningful discussions and much useful information and advice provided by members, guest contributions and the Countryside/Public Rights of Way (PROW) Team. Thank you to all involved.

Some LAF members participated in the consultation process of Rhondda Cynon Taff's Revised Local Development Plan (LDP). Updates on the LDP, 'Out and About 2', 'Active Travel', 'Sustainable Farming Scheme' and RCT Sports were provided. Revisions to the structure of RCT Countryside/PROW Team with staffing changes were announced and notice that end of term recruitment/re-appointment of LAF Forum members would commence in April 2026.

A presentation was delivered by Future Valleys showing the newly opened A465 and Non-Motorised User (NMU) routes. Though there have been significant achievements for The Great Glamorgan Way (TGGW) in the Vale of Glamorgan, funding for some local council areas has ceased and new sources of funding will be required for the project to continue in these authorities. An overview of The National Forest of Wales Pilot Trial was provided for this exciting long-term Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) project.

Year at a Glance – Key Achievements and On-going Priorities

Key Achievements During 2025–26

- Supported improved shared access opportunities (walkers, cyclists and horse riders) associated with the A465 and National Forest initiatives.
- Contributed to discussions on the Revised Local Development Plan, ensuring public access issues were considered.
- Promoted improved standards for public rights of way through discussion of the Sustainable Farming Scheme.
- Continued support for development of the Great Glamorgan Way and associated equestrian infrastructure.

Ongoing Priorities

- Securing the future funding and delivery of the Great Glamorgan Way.
- Recognition and registration of Village Greens within planning processes.
- Improving opportunities for horse riders and other non-motorised users.
- Developing the Forum's position on access to water and water-based recreation.

Chairperson - Claire Brenton-Taylor

Deputy Chairperson – Paul Ford

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council Members:

Cllr Ann Crimmings, Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure

Jason Bragg - Countryside & Rights of Way Officer and LAF Secretary

Sarah Williams – Countryside and Public Rights of Way Administrator (until August 2025)

Timothy Phillips - Definitive Map Officer (until September 2024)

Matthew Farley - Planning & Enforcement Manager (from November 2024 until November 2025)

Thomas Rogers - Definitive Map Officer (from July 2025)

Mia Thomas – Public Rights of Way & Planning Technician (from February 2026)

Natural Resources Wales Members:

Andy Robinson – Statutory Observer and Team Leader People and Places

Miki Miyata Lee - Statutory Observer and South Wales Senior Recreation and Access Partnerships Officer

Guest Speakers

Clare Hewitt, Owen Jones, Emma Lewis: RCT Local Development Plan Team

Gavin Bennett: RCT Sport

Emyr Davies: Future Valley Project Co.

James Walker: Great Glamorgan way

Andrew Davies: Welsh Government - (National Forest of Wales)

Written Contributions

Cllr Andrew Morgan OBE: Council Leader

Minutes of Meeting, Notes and handouts

Available from RCT PROW Team and/or on the department website

Meeting Diary

Dates of Meetings: Tuesday 21 May 2024, Tuesday 3 December 2024, Monday 30 June 2025, Thursday 12 February 2026.

Meeting Activities

MEETING SIX	
Item	Activity
Annual Report	The 2023-2024 Annual Report had been circulated prior to this meeting for members to review and provide input. Two amendments were requested i.e. for a link to the Great Glamorgan Way website be inserted and corrections to the titles of NRW Statutory Observers. Amendments were later made for the report to be adopted. The addition of the use of maps and pictures was suggested for future reports.
Revised Local Development Plan	The LDP Review Team gave members an overview of the replacement LDP process and answered questions.

Out & About 2 Forward Work Programme 2024-2025 AOB	Questions and concerns were raised about Green Infrastructure, particularly in Common Land and flexible boundaries. Concerns were raised about alleged historical planning breaches and non-compliance relating to planning permissions/conditions. In response from RCT, for PROW, this could initiate opportunities to improve the network by diverting paths onto better routes and for the LDP the possibility of adding Village Greens to the plan. Members were invited to input to the LDP. RCT PROW gave an update on the progress made towards ROWIP objectives. A summary handout was provided to members. The following projects were discussed: • Cold Water Dipping at Cwm Clydach Country Park and the complex issue of liability. • What constitutes Common Land? An explanation required for better understanding. • The importance of effective reporting of issues. • Directory of local groups project – is ongoing. The following guest speakers/organisations were suggested: • Transport for Wales • RCT Highways • Ken Moon of Tir y Ffridd, Pontypridd, community led plan. Due to non-attendance, it was decided to remove 4 members from the forum. These members were advised. Members were asked to try to recruit farmers/landowners.
MEETING SEVEN	
Item Countryside Team Update LDP Update Active Travel Update	Activity A brief update was provided by RCT of changes to be made to Countryside's structure and members agreed that this could enable the forum to be working closer with the Planning team. LDP team provided an update, and some important points were highlighted. The question of Village Green designation was raised and to be followed up with LDP team who it was said would be attending the next meeting. It was suggested that members submit questions for the LDP team prior to the next meeting to afford attending officers the time to respond fully. Active Travel team gave an update, and some important points were highlighted. It was noted by one member that the Taff Trail realignment and improvements between Nant Cae

RCT Sports	Dudwg and Pontypridd High School were a welcome addition to residents of Ynysybwl and surrounding areas.
Directory – working group	An update was provided. There has been reduced funding from Sports Wales and the local authority due to focus governed by Sports Wales’ agenda. On a brighter note, Active Travel Team have produced videos of active travel routes that are available on the RCT Sports page and YouTube. In addition, there are links to RCT PROW page promoting walking, cycling and horse-riding routes.
Forward work programme	A directory of relevant local groups has been produced, and collation of data is to continue with some members offering to help. A copy was sent out to members
	The following items were discussed for future LAF engagement: • Cold Water Dipping – a working group to investigate concerns regarding liability and if any policies exist of organisations e.g. Safe Cymru. NRW confirmed they did not have a policy but are looking to work with the Welsh Government at this complex area and the establishment of a bathing directive framework. • Transport for Wales – to be invited. • Highways – to be invited. • Ken Moon to be invited. • Common Land – someone to talk about this. • Effective reporting of issues – information to be presented on how to do in an effective way and use the data captured.
AOB	• Great Glamorgan Way (GGW): An agreement is under review for RCT to be responsible for future maintenance of licenced bridleways/permissive bridleways crossing NRW sites. This is to be replicated with Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr Tydfil, Cardiff and Bridgend local authorities and will ensure that horse riding is permitted on sections of the GGW through NRW sites. However, funding for this project is uncertain. • Virtual Meetings: A request was made asking if this is possible and RCT will investigate. • LAF Involvement in informal consultations: A request was made for LAF members to be involved in pre-order consultations on PublicPath Orders (PPO), Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO) and Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO). No consensus was reached after discussing with some members feeling

	that that general operational decisions were beyond the role of the forum, which should be only advisory on proposals that have a broader impact. An overview by RCT of the DMMO and PPO processes will be provided in a future meeting. Gates on Green Lane Highways: Some forum members have agreed to set up a sub-group to review gates set up on unsurfaced public vehicular highways.
MEETING EIGHT	
Item	Activity
Revised local Development Plan	An update on the LDP process following the consultation on the Preferred Strategy was given and on the Green Infrastructure Assessment process and assessment.
Green Spaces Definition Query	The LDP team explained that there can be various definitions for Green Spaces depending on the context in which it is used. It was clarified that unlike Green Infrastructure as defined in Planning Policy Wales, there is no definition of Green Spaces in this policy. In the context of the above, Green Infrastructure includes Green Spaces such as parks and cemeteries.
A465 Dualling Scheme	A presentation was delivered by Future Valleys to show the newly opened A465 and Non-Motorised User (NMU) routes. Copies of a detailed brochure were shared with members. Feedback from residents on social media was positive following completion of the scheme. Forum members were impressed with the size and scale of the project and new offerings it provides for access.
Great Glamorgan Way (GGW)	An update on the project was provided and showcased achievements to date in the Vale of Glamorgan where the project is based and being actively delivered. Copies of the project report were shared with forum Members. Regarding funding for the project, continuation has only been possible with funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund since funding from Enabling Natural resources ended in the areas of Bridgend CBC and Vale of Glamorgan CC. And, internal bids of other partners were not so successful, i.e. Merthyr, RCT and Cardiff councils. Members motioned to support the project by helping to identify funding opportunities for the project in RCT.
Annual Report	It was suggested that the next Annual Report be drafted as a collaborative effort by forum members.
AOB	Directory: An updated directory was provided and circulated to members.

	• Active Travel: the latest updated was circulated prior to the meeting. • Agenda item for next meeting: GGW funding. • Access to Water for Water Related Recreation: The forum was asked to consider producing a document outlining how it sees access improvements would look within RCT and Wales as a whole and that this could be raised as a matter to look at with the National Forum for Wales. The document could represent LAF thoughts. • Staffing: Two changes to the Countryside Team were announced – Sarah Williams will move to the LDP Team, and a new Definitive Map Officer will start with Countryside.
MEETING NINE	
Item	Activity
National Forest of Wales Pilot Trail	By Teams, the project was introduced with an overview of how the Welsh Government and NRW are working together. This will be a 10–15-year project, with the pilot section running for 80km between Barry and Glyn Neath and a launch event would take place at Porth Kerry Country Park on 4 March 2026. Permanence, width and length of the trail were queried and whether use would be shared and be compliant with standard width for multi-purpose use. It was stated that the aim of the path would be as multi-user friendly as possible. A question was asked if the launch event would include horse riders and confirmation was that it was being promoted as a walking event but that the enquiry regarding equestrian access would be made with Porth Kerry Country Park site management.
Sustainable Farming Scheme	As explained by PROW officer, this scheme commenced on 1 January 2026 by the Welsh Government. A requirement for participation in the scheme is that landowners must meet their legal responsibilities in respect of Public Rights of Way and access to land. The scheme aims to improve public access by replacing stiles with gates where appropriate and install new gates. Field officers and inspectors are responsible for field checks. A concern was raised by a forum member of farmers diverting cross-field paths. Another question was how this scheme differs from previous ones, and it was explained that under the current scheme, as a prerequisite to joining, landowners must maintain, keep clear and ensure public access to all PROW crossing their land.
Great Glamorgan Way	With funding and project ending before April 2026, to go forward local authorities would look to share the cost of keeping the website running. Discussion took place regarding construction of a horse corral/enclosure at Barry Sidings

Active Travel Update	where there is equestrian access to Gelliwion Forest and the Way and the proposed bridleway diversion at Trehafod-Barry Sidings. RCT PROW would look to progress this next financial year. An update was prepared by Cllr Adrian Morgan and circulated prior to the meeting. A discussion was had regarding stabilisation work to the section of Taf Trail between Coedpenmaen Road and Nantcaedudwg brook after flood damage and to was clarified that completion on repair work is expected by end of March 2026. More consultation with horse riders was requested and for more visibility with Active Travel and an article in the Council newsletter to promote this was suggested. A further question was if all Active Travel routes are barrier free and if not, could this be arranged and advice was for this to be requested directly to RCT Transport Team.
Out and About 2 Update	PROW Officer summarised rights of way activities and progress from April 2024 to February 2026 and circulated handouts. The work of the PROW Team was complimented by Cllr Crimmings. The use of AI for enquiries and complaints was queried by members and staff found it to be generally negative and time consuming.
End of Term and Recruitment/reappointment	LAF forum recruitment for next term May/June 2026 to be started April 2026. Current members can email to request reappointment.
Annual Report	Annual report due and volunteers were asked to write this. A few members agreed to contribute to do so.
AOB	• A request for a horse riding network plan such as Carmarthen CC has, issues of cars mounting grass verges and declining numbers of horse riding on roads, if there were to be works on paths around Shoni's Pond to improve access to routes and if these paths were PROWs were matters raised and RCT PROW Team would add these to the inspection list. • It was announced that RCT Sports is starting a walking project and looking for groups to participate. Definition of a group was requested and PROW Officer to confirm. • Issues of accessibility in Blaencwm due to fallen trees was raised. This may be NRW land but PROW Officer to check.