

GLAF consultations

APPENDIX A

27/5/2025	Woodland consultation - Naunton	local interest passed to Area Officer
8/5/2025 & 2/4/2025	Restriction to access land at Symonds Yate Consultation and result	Shared with local Area officer & PPO Officer
6/5/2025	Woodland creation at Hoarhorns, Edge End Forest of Dean	Shared with Area officer
15/4/2025	The Great Outdoors Shared article on accessibility	Shared with GLAF
7/4/2025	Oxfordshire ROWIP draft	Shared with GLAF
31/3/2025	Felling Licence High Woods Nympsfield/Nailsworth	Shared with Area Officer
28/3/2025	Woodland estate management plan Bowldown	Shared with Area Officer
6/3/2025	National Highways Major projects annual stakeholder survey	Shared with GLAF



Gloucestershire Local Access Forum

Annual Report 2024-2025

Introduction

1 The GLAF has had a busy year in 2024/25, and amongst its greatest achievements has been the completion of the Connecting Parishes Project, which originated as an idea from the GLAF, and which was followed through with a successful bid for significant funding. Eighteen PROW close to the A417 highway improvement scheme have now been created or had improvements made, to increase their overall accessibility. Away from this the GLAF is still actively trying to push forward for a survey on, and subsequent repairs to, the Llanthony swing bridge, to reconnect residents and visitors from Gloucester City Centre to the very important and extensive strategic access resource at Alney Island, and this issue will continue to be a focus in 2025/26. We are also continuing to press GCC to improve their efficiency in processing DMMOs in particular (as well as PPOs) and have given formal advice to the effect that non-contentious DMMOs should be dealt with via officer delegated powers (rather than being sent to Committee). Again, this is something we will continue to press for during the coming year.

2 The membership of GLAF has been very active between our three meetings, and this included a very successful visit to the Accessibility Centre at Aston Rowant in Oxfordshire during the summer of 2024 as well as visits to sites improved by the Connecting Parishes Project. Despite this very productive year for the GLAF, following another dip in membership for various personal reasons during the latter part of the 2024/25 (and which has unfortunately continued in early 2025/26), recruitment of new members will also be a focus for the coming year.

Alison Williamson
GLAF Chair

Purpose and Functions of Local Access Forum

3. Gloucestershire Local Access Forum (GLAF) was established by Gloucestershire County Council in 2003 and consists of members appointed by the County Council representing users of rights of way and access land and also owners and occupiers of land crossed by rights of way. In addition, two councillors serve on the forum. Whilst Gloucestershire traditionally had an informal consultative body, since at least the 1960's, GLAF is a statutory body established by Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and is also subject to the Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007. Local operational arrangements are set out in the GLAF terms of reference.

4. Its functions are to provide advice to the county council and Natural England also to parish and town councils and National Landscapes (formerly AONB) on rights of way and access land established under the CROW Act 2000. It generally meets three times a year and as such provides a strategic overview of matters rather than being involved in operational matters, although these often inform the work of GLAF.

Membership as at 31 March 2025

Member Name	Representational Group
Alison Williamson (Chair)	Nature
Richard Holmes (Vice-Chair)	Users
Sue Ellis	Users (Resigned 12 June 2025)
Jackie German	Users
Cllr Rebekah Hoyland	County Councillor
Paul Lockley	Users
Lucy Moriarty	Landowner/Nature
Charlie Morriss	Users
Alan Shelley	Landowner (Resigned 12 June 2025)
Chas Townley	Users
Cllr Robert Vines	County Councillor (Resigned 4 May 2025)

5. Robert Vines, following the county elections is no longer a councillor, so has ended his association with the Forum. Alan Shelley and Sue Ellis have also both resigned. Alan had been a member of the forum since it was created and has been very knowledgeable about common land issues. Sue Ellis was a horse rider and member of the British Horse Society. GLAF thanks the members for their contributions to the Forum.

Meetings during 2024-2025

6. The Forum held three meetings in the year on the 27 June, 24 October 2024 and 13 February 2025. The June and February meetings were held at Brockworth and Charlton Kings respectively, following site visits to look at routes improved through the Connecting Parishes project (discussed in paragraph 10). The October meeting was held at Shire Hall and included a presentation on the Eelscapes project, being led by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

Range of Issues Discussed

Definitive Map Modification Orders

7. The Forum remains concerned about the slow progress with the processing of Definitive Map Modification Orders, which can be made under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Regular statistics on this are reported to both GLAF and the Environment Scrutiny Committee. We note that the County Council considered a motion on this subject at its meeting on the 12 September 2024, which after discussion was passed unanimously by the Council.

8. Over a long period time, the forum has made a series of suggestions to improve the speed of progress, including suggesting efficiency improvements to the investigation process and more recently at the February meeting, recommended that the Council follows the lead of other authorities by delegating more decision making to officers. There are currently more than 45 objected orders, some originating from applications made more than two decades ago. We note that the council has increased funding a couple of years ago, but if this logjam is going to be broken, it is likely that additional resources are required.

Diversion, Extinguishment and Creation Orders

9. Applications to divert, extinguish or create rights of way can be made under the Highways Act (HA) to the county council, or in the case of land affected by development applications can be made under the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) to the district, borough and city councils. GLAF is concerned that there is a three-year backlog for HA applications, to the extent that the Council now maintains a waiting list before applications are invited. During the year, additional staff were recruited with the Rights of Way team, as much of this area of work can be self-financed by charges to applicants. Whilst this is currently a discretionary service, it is important that this work is prioritised as orders often result in reducing conflicts and difficulties for both landowners and users.

Connecting Parishes Project

10. GLAF has been actively involved in the Connecting Parishes Project which has seen a further £163,000 invested in 17 schemes providing accessibility and connectivity improvements to paths in parishes close to the Air Balloon “missing link” scheme using National Highways designated funds. This project demonstrates the benefit of relatively small investments in improving the rights of way network and the Forum would like to see opportunities for such improvements to more widely available.

Maintenance of the Network

11. Reports of issues encountered on the Rights of Way network can now be reported through the Gloucestershire Fix My Street application. The Forum receives statistical updates on work undertaken and it was reported that PROW received over 2600 reports and requests during the year and 3439 service requests were resolved during the same period. The Public Rights of Way team were also asked to comment on 509 planning applications by planning authorities, which were considered to have an impact on the rights of way network.

Former Railway Bridges

12. GLAF is aware of continuing issues with identifying funding for three former railway bridges, which illustrate the difficulties in progressing essential works within existing budgets. They have been well known about for several years, in consequence GLAF is asking for regular updates on progress: -

- **Stowfield Viaduct (also known as Lydbrook Bridge)** – This is a jointly owned by Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council and takes the Wye Valley Walk from Lydbrook to Welsh Bicknor and is an adopted highway. It was closed for some years from 2016 until a temporary surface was constructed, this has now failed but at the time of our February meeting no information on a plan for its repair had been established.
- **Pilley Foot Bridge, Charlton Kings (also described as Patesians Bridge)** – This bridge was closed 9½ years ago due to safety concerns. Using funding from the Connecting Parishes project a Quantity Surveyor has costed options, however, no funding has yet been identified for the repairs or other options. Additionally, there is no clarity as to who is responsible for the bridge. It was purchased in 1971 by Cheltenham Borough Council, following the closure of the railway line. The footpath across the bridge is on the

definitive map but as a former railway bridge the County Council responsibility extends only to the surface of the path, but the structure also needs to be repaired by the owner.

- **Llanthony Swing Bridge, Gloucester** – This is a historic railway bridge, reputedly linked to Brunel (but evidence for this is disputed). It is a grade II listed structure, owned by the County Council. It previously provided permissive access to Alney Island but is now in disrepair and has been usable for many years. Some GLAF members have observed that there is a risk of adverse possession arising on part of the land owned by the County Council and as a result lawful access from the city side of the bridge could be at risk of being lost. Currently, there is no confirmation that this issue has been addressed.

Disability Access

13. During the year GLAF members visited the National Land Access Centre at Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, which demonstrates the use and maintenance of gaps, latches and gates to improve access to the countryside, including for users of trampers and other vehicles for disabled ramblers. Some of the facilities seen at Aston Rowant are experimental, nevertheless the Forum is keen for these to be trialled within Gloucestershire. The Forum is represented on the Cotswold Trails and Access Partnership, which using DEFRA funding allocated through Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) in 2024-2025 has spent £254,000 on 25 projects. CNL are developing additional trampler routes within the CNL at Leckhampton Hill and Coopers Hill.



**May 2025 update to Members of GLAF
Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs)**

General: (to 30 May 2025)

	End of 2020	End of 2021	End of 2022	End of 2023	End of 2024	So far in 2025
Total number of 'unresolved' applications:	168	171	210	213	207	202
No. of new 'min.14(1) compliant' applications received in Year:	7	21	35	13	7	1
No. of applications 'determined' in Year:	4	8	6	17	16	7
No. of applications fully 'resolved' in Year:	3	11	5	13	10	6
No. of routes added to DM&S by 'other legal mechanisms' in Year:	n/a	3	4	3	0	3

(“Minimum 14(1) compliant” applications are valid applications in terms of needing determination. They are only described as ‘fully 14(2) compliant’ once the applicant has confirmed they have served Notice on the landowner via Forms 2 & 3.)

Number of all ‘undetermined’ applications: (to 30 May 2025)

	End of 2020	End of 2021	End of 2022	End of 2023	End of 2024	So far in 2025
Undetermined	23	21	50	53	48	47
Undet-Archived*	54	52	52	44	40	35
Undet-Non14(2) *	57	61	72	74	73	73

(“Archived” applications are whereby the intended effect of the application is likely to be nulled by a subsequent change in legislation (for example, the NERC Act); “Non14(2)” applications have not been ‘fully made’ but are still valid applications in terms of needing determination.)

Number of all unresolved ‘determined’ applications: (to 30 May 2025)

	Apps at appeal/ publication/ confirmation stage	Apps with unresolved objections	
		Submitted to SoS	Awaiting submission
No.	2	2, plus 7 pending	43

Determinations in Jan - April 2025:

Total = 7

573/11/094(1)	03 February 2025	Not to make an Order for BOAT but to update the List of Streets for part to reflect the public MPV rights under 67(2)NERC.
573/11/042.5(5)	04 February 2025	Not to make an Order for BOAT but to update the List of Streets for part to reflect the public MPV rights under 67(2)NERC.
573/11/063(1)	04 February 2025	Not to make an Order for BOAT but to update the List of Streets to reflect the public MPV rights under 67(2)NERC.
573/11/214(17)	04 February 2025	Refuse as outcome proposed by DMMO claim achieved using alternative legal mechanism, Creation Order under s.26 Highways Act, 1980.
573/11/115(2)	17 March 2025	Not to make an Order because none of the 67(2) & (3) NERC 2006 exceptions apply.
573/11/115(3)	17 March 2025	Not to make an Order because none of the 67(2) & (3) NERC 2006 exceptions apply.
573/11/209(14)	17 March 2025	Not to make an Order for BOAT but to update the List of Streets to reflect the public MPV rights under 67(2)NERC.

Additional comment/information: (to 30 May 2025)

GLAF Comment: "GLAF recommend that delegated powers be made the default for determination of DMMOs; however where cases are controversial or subject to many valid objections that they then should be reported to CROW Cttee for determination. This is a similar process to that used within planning applications."

This recommendation would need to be put directly to the Council's Democratic Services Unit (DemocraticServices@gloucestershire.gov.uk), headed by Stephen Bace. The CROW Committee is supported by joanne.bolton@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

However, I would comment that the above proposal does have potential drawbacks. Limiting Committee involvement to only the most controversial DMMO cases could be counterproductive - these cases often require more nuanced legal interpretation, and if the Committee meets less frequently to only discuss the more complex cases, there is a potential risk of inconsistent decisions due to limited 'practical' experience, despite prior training.

CROW Committee and the elections:

The recent County Council elections resulted in a large change to the membership of the Committee. Of the 9 Members, only 2 have stood on the Committee previously (as highlighted below). All Members must undergo training before they can sit on the Committee, and this training session has been scheduled for 30th June.

> Commons and Rights of Way Committee						
GCC members	Lib Dem	Reform	Green	Con	Lab	Ind
9	Cllr Cheryl Agg	Cllr Leigh Challis	Cllr Ian Cameron	Cllr Tom Bradley		
	Cllr David Willingham	Cllr Jason Preece				
	Cllr Rebecca Trimmell					
	Cllr Roger Whybom					
	Cllr Angie Boyes					

2025 programme:

As a result of the May elections, whereas four CROW Committees are usually held each year, there are only planned to be three during 2025 (in March, October and December), to allow for training of new Committee members on the 30th of June. Determinations under delegated powers will be unaffected and will continue to be programmed in as & when required.

Regulations (cut-off/DeReg, etc.):

No further known update.

Staffing:

Funding for a 'career grade' Officer was granted in the 25/26 budget. As you are aware, experienced DMMO Officers are hard to find, and this will enable us to 'grow our own'. The new job profile has recently gone through the Council's grading system and will be progressing towards recruitment over the next month.

Karen Brookes Pearman, Asset Data Team Leader (Highway Records & DMMO)

30 May 2025

GCC PROW TEAM UPDATE FOR GLAF – 2024/2025 Annual report.

PUBLIC PATH ORDERS

Highways Act	2024/2025
Applications in progress	19
Orders made & confirmed/completed	11
Applications waiting progress	5
Waiting List	95
TCPA (development orders from District Councils/DOT)	
Orders Made & completed	3

OPERATIONAL

Requests for Service (inc maintenance etc)	2024/2025
Received	2626
Resolved	3439
Planning Consultations	509
S31(6) Depositions & renewals	20
Temp closures inc emergency, event, extensions & full orders	110

Note for GLAF Meeting on Iron Bridge, Churchdown

2. I was somewhat troubled by the discussion at the February meeting on the Iron Bridge. This is because I am highly doubtful that there is any realistic prospect of a grant being forthcoming for the repair costs.

I have since investigated the ownership of the bridge, via Land Registry Records and also the continual renewal of the TTRO to keep the bridge closed and also met the local campaign group who are campaigning for it to be re-opened and are members of Open Spaces Society. I have also looked at the Quantity Surveyor Report. On behalf of OSS, I have subsequently been in touch with GCC PROW Team, Cheltenham Borough Council and also the Heritage Railway Estate Team at National Highways.

2 Clearly therefore it is right that I should now declare an interest in this matter but I understand that does not preclude me discussing this matter at Thursday's meeting.

Land Registry Records

3. A parcel of land which is mainly the Pilley Bridge Nature Reserve was sold by British Railways Board(BRB) to Cheltenham Borough Council in 1971 and included 4 bridges, 2 of which were within the former Municipal Borough (who were an urban district exercising highway authority functions for non-main roads and rights of way) were subject to a Highways Act 1969 agreement and clearly responsibility for these 2 (one another footpath) has now devolved to GCC as highway authority. The other 2, including the Iron Bridge, were outside the then municipal borough and were subject to different terms – most likely effected under the Open Spaces Act 1906 or similar legislation – and these clearly followed the Nature Reserve to the post 1974 district.

Correspondence with Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC)

4. I approached the Asset Management Team at CBC and some weeks later received a response which stated that the responsibility for the bridge had not been resolved and suggested that the matter be left until after Local Government Reorganisation on the helpful suggestion that would resolve ownership issues. This felt like kicking the can down the road. I then wrote to the Chief Executive at CBC and eventually received an acknowledgement advising me that it was being treated as a complaint. Despite several follow up emails, I have not been sent a substantive reply but was advised late last week that it was with a Cabinet Member for review.

National Highways Heritage Railway Estate (HRE)

5 The covenants that Cheltenham Borough Council have with BRB included provision that BRB could, in default, recover its costs for the repair of the bridge. And the legal advice that HRE have now received is that the DfT, as the successor body to the BRB, now retains the statutory duty to repair the bridge and is now in the process of communicating with Cheltenham Borough Council to see the repair of the bridge.

6 One aspect I have looked at is the question of responsibility of repair of the surface of the highway under Section 116 of the Transport Act 1968. HRE do not consider this applies and that CBC is wholly responsible, however, I have a

suspicion that this interpretation is incorrect and that GCC as highway authority is responsible for the maintenance of the surface as Section 116 commenced before the bridge was sold to CBC and Section 122(2), defines a railway for the purposes of Section 116 as including: -

“references to a railway which has ceased to carry any traffic and to the site of a railway from which the track has been removed.”

Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO)

7. From Department for Transport I have obtained copies of correspondence seeking the extension of the TTRO, which has now been in place for 9½ years. It does not appear that the County Council has progressed matters with speed to resolve matters and there needs to much more vigour and attention to resolving matters rather than simply finding a form of words to justify the further extension of TTRO.

8. There is perhaps some concern that Amey, the County Council's then outsourced highways contractor, dealt with the matter, asking at an early stage for the TTRO to made “indefinitely”. A copy of a summary is circulated with this note. It should be noted that the reason for the current extension was to enable a “structural engineer” to investigate the bridge and I have asked the PROW team for sight of a copy of this.

9. Perhaps, we need some robust reassurance that internal governance arrangements mean that critical challenge is provided to longer term extensions.

Quantity Surveyor Report

10. The consultancy report paid for the Connecting Parishes funding was undertaken by a Quantity Surveyor – which means they are not a structural engineer but simply a construction cost consultant. The QS report primarily looks at three expensive options for the reconstruction of the bridge, however, in paragraph 2.2, discussing the refurbishment of the bridge it notes: -

“The structure of the bridge at the present time can be considered reasonable but to preserve its longevity parts of the rusted structure, mainly to the components that form the bottom (deck) boom need replacing.”

11. I am not a Structural Engineer, but this holds out the possibility that it might be possible to replace the footbridge surface and re-open the bridge to the public whilst the more permanent repair of the bridge is developed. Clearly, some investigation needs to be undertaken at a lower cost option which does not involve repairs to the structure. Perhaps a way forward might be to obtain a structural surveyor's report on whether the surface could be replaced on the existing structure.

Conclusion

12. I trust this provides useful background for on the issues with this bridge.

Chas Townley
9 June 2025