Minutes of the LAF: 8th July 2026 at 2pm
(held at Branstone Farm Studies Centre)

LAF Members in attendance:
Cllr Paul Fuller - Chairman
Mike Slater - IW Rambles Association
Richard Grogan – National Landscapes
Mark Earp – Landowner
Cllr James Whelan - Elected by IWC

Observers / Guests in attendance:
Jennine Gardiner - LAF Secretary / PROW Officer
Kelvin Hindmarch – IWC PROW Maintenance
Penny Acton – Gurnard PC - IWALC
Kathy Domaille – Godshill Park Farm
Claire Walker and Simon Walker – Unlimited Access & Inclusion Ltd
Darrel Clarke - IWC Public Rights of Way Manager
Kathryn Bunker – IWC England Coast Path Officer
Alec Broom - IWC Green Link Project Manager Regeneration Team
Malcom Ross (Cyclewight)

Apologies:
Cllr Chris Jarman – Elected by IWC
Tricia Merrifield – Equestrians
Carole Pierce
Mick Lyons – IWALC / Havenstreet & Ashey PC
Helen Jones – Cycle Wight
John Heather - NFU

Declaration of Interest:
None declared

Minutes of previous meeting 08/01/25
Not discussed

Speakers:

1.Unlimited Access & Inclusion Update Presenter: Claire Walker, Unlimited Access & Inclusion
Website: www.unlimitedaccess.co.uk

Background
Unlimited Access & Inclusion is run by Claire and Simon Walker and was established shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic. The organisation was created to help promote the Isle of Wight as an accessible destination for people with mobility impairments, whether permanent or temporary, and for those who experience other accessibility or inclusion barriers.

The project was inspired by a visit to Legoland, which had been promoted as wheelchair-friendly but proved difficult to navigate due to undulating terrain and accessibility challenges that had not been fully communicated beforehand. This highlighted the importance of providing accurate and practical accessibility information so that people can make informed decisions before visiting a destination.

The organisation's website provides accessibility reviews and information relating to attractions, facilities and locations across the Isle of Wight, helping residents and visitors identify places that meet their individual needs. Areas considered during assessments include:

- Parking and accessible parking provision.
- Electric mobility scooter and wheelchair charging facilities.
- Surface conditions and gradients.
- Access routes and path widths.
- Steps, ramps and level access.
- Toilet and changing facilities.
- Seating and resting opportunities.
- Signage and wayfinding.

Accessibility Audits and Assessments

Unlimited Access & Inclusion undertakes accessibility audits and assessments for organisations, attractions and land managers to identify barriers to access and opportunities for improvement.

The aim is to move beyond basic legal compliance and encourage environments that are genuinely inclusive and welcoming to the widest possible range of users. Their work supports inclusive design principles and helps ensure facilities can be used by people with a broad range of abilities and needs. Unlimited Access & Inclusion services include:

- Accessibility audits and assessments.
- Training.
- Corporate legal guidance and transition support.
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP) support.
- General advice and signposting.
- Product sourcing.
- Funding and grant sourcing.
- Website accessibility compliance and redesign.

Previous Projects

Completed and ongoing projects have included work with:

- Wightlink.
- Isle of Wight AONB / National Landscape.
- Ryde Beach.
- Gurnard Parish Council.
- Wildheart Animal Sanctuary.
- New Carnival Company.
- Isle of Wight Sea Pool Project.
- Swim the Wight.
- Environment Agency.

Upcoming Projects

Planned projects include:

- **Accessible Guide to the Isle of Wight**, potentially in partnership with Visit Isle of Wight.
- **Accessible Walks Guide**, with a hope of working alongside the Isle of Wight Ramblers.
- **Accessible Bathrooms Project**, promoting and improving awareness of accessible toilet and changing facilities. As an example, Sandown has an excellent Changing Places facility, but publicity has been limited due to concerns about vandalism.

- **Beach Access Project**, working with partners from the mainland to improve access to beaches for people with disabilities and mobility impairments.

Discussion Points
Much of the work undertaken to date has been with organisations, but there is now a desire to engage more widely with community groups and other organisations across the Island.

- Rural bus stops were identified as an area where relatively small improvements could make a significant difference. For example, handrails and other support features can assist people who are unable to stand unaided for extended periods while waiting for public transport.
- Clear and visible signage to accessible toilets and changing facilities is often lacking and can greatly improve the experience of visitors.

A recurring theme was that many people do not fully appreciate accessibility challenges until they experience them themselves. As stated during the discussion, *"you don't know what you need until you need it."* The overall aim is to make the Isle of Wight accessible to as many people as possible, enabling residents and visitors to travel independently and participate fully in community life.

The "Purple Pound"
The meeting discussed the concept of the "Purple Pound", which refers to the spending power of disabled people and their households. Investing in accessibility not only improves inclusion and quality of life but can also provide significant economic benefits to businesses, attractions and the wider visitor economy.

Beyond Minimum Compliance
Claire highlighted the need to move beyond basic "tick-box" accessibility requirements.
It was noted that some facilities are designed on the assumption that if a disabled person cannot manage independently, a carer will assist them. However, this approach does not reflect the reality that:

- Not everyone has a carer.
- Some people prefer to remain independent.
- Accessibility improvements should enable individuals to access facilities, services and attractions without relying on support from others wherever possible.

Accessibility should be viewed as an integral part of good design rather than simply a legal requirement. By removing barriers and providing accurate information, organisations can help create a more inclusive Isle of Wight that supports independence, dignity and equal access for all.

Questions and Discussion

Richard Grogan (National Landscapes) advised that National Landscapes would be supportive of funding an Accessible Walks Guide. Claire was asked to provide a specification and proposal for consideration.

Claire let the group know that Unlimited Access & Inclusion had previously carried out an accessibility assessment for the Rights of Way Service relating to the Needles access gate across the road. The assessment resulted in improvements being made by the National Trust, demonstrating the value of independent accessibility reviews in identifying practical enhancements.

Claire explained that Unlimited Access & Inclusion does charge for accessibility audits and assessments. However, fees are kept at a reasonable level to ensure that organisations can access specialist advice and support. Claire emphasised that both she and Simon are passionate about their work and are committed to improving accessibility and inclusion across the Isle of Wight.

Paul Fuller asked whether Unlimited Access & Inclusion would be willing to engage with Town and Parish Councils to help identify accessibility improvements that could potentially be delivered through Section 106 contributions, grant funding or local match-funding opportunities.

Claire confirmed that the organisation would be happy to work with Town and Parish Councils and other local groups to identify priorities, undertake assessments and help develop projects that improve accessibility within local communities.

2. IW Green Link Project Update – Presenter: Alec Broome, Project Manager, IW Green Link Project

Project Overview

- The IW Green Link Project aims to create a shared-use route between Newport and Freshwater Bay, connecting towns and villages along the way.
- The route is intended for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and will be designed in accordance with LTN 1/20 guidance where possible. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120
- The aspiration is to provide a route that is accessible, inclusive and usable by as many people as possible.
- The project has been discussed for more than 20 years and is now progressing through delivery.

Funding

The project has secured:

- £13 million Active Travel funding
- £2 million match funding
- The budget is tight and must be spent carefully to maximise benefits and complete the greatest number of route improvements.
- Grant funding is currently available until 2029.
- The funds must be spent on what they are granted for so the grant money cannot be used to fund another project such as the Rookley link to the existing cycle track.

Delivery and Design

The project has been under development for several years, with work focused on connecting existing route sections and filling missing links.

Highway-related elements can take considerable time due to the need for:

- Traffic surveys and counts
- Safety assessments
- Junction improvements
- Speed management measures
- Gateway features at road crossings

Vegetation clearance works must be timed to avoid the bird nesting season, meaning some works are scheduled for September onwards.

- The preferred route width is 3 metres, where feasible.
- Sealed surfaces will be used where possible, although some sections may need to be constructed with compacted unbound surfaces due to site constraints.

Maintenance

A question was raised regarding future maintenance responsibilities.

- It was advised that maintenance would likely fall to either the Rights of Way Service or Isle of Wight Highways.
- No funding has been allocated within the current project budget for future maintenance.

Drainage and Flooding

- It was confirmed that each section will have its own drainage design.
- Concerns were raised about placing additional pressure on existing drainage networks.

- Afton Marsh is regularly flooding, Darrel Clarke advised that he had recently met with the Environment Agency and a culvert is currently becoming blocked on a weekly basis, and investigations are ongoing to determine responsibility for its maintenance.
- The marsh has experienced widespread flooding and it was suggested that, without the path improvement works undertaken approximately two years ago, this route (path F74) would probably now have been lost.

Landowner Agreements
Most landowner permissions have been secured.
Some negotiations remain ongoing, including discussions associated with the Great Park Estate.
Alec advised that affected landowners are aware of the proposals and engagement has generally been positive.

Programme
The aim is to complete the project within the next 18 months to 2 years.
Route sections may open individually as they are completed, although no firm opening dates have yet been established.

Route Challenges
The Kite Hill section presents design challenges and may require departures from LTN 1/20 guidance.

Climate Change and Future Resilience
Questions were raised about how climate change considerations are being incorporated, including:
- Flood resilience
- Shade provision
- Seating and rest areas
- Bus stop improvements

Alec advised that planning applications and associated approvals will require the relevant assessments, strategies and supporting documentation as part of the design process.

Accessibility
A question was raised regarding accessibility assessments.
Alec advised that no formal accessibility review has yet been undertaken, although discussions could begin to have proposed designs reviewed from an accessibility perspective.

Compulsory Purchase Powers
Alec confirmed that compulsory purchase powers remain an option. However, these are considered a last resort as the process can be lengthy and the project team's preference is to continue negotiating informally with landowners.
To date, landowners have generally been supportive and recognise the potential benefits of the scheme.

Questions and Further Information
Any enquiries regarding the IW Green Link Project or associated cycling and greenway schemes should be directed to: Alec Broome, Project Manager, IW Green Link Project
Alec.Broome@iow.gov.uk

Road Safety Subgroup - Isle of Wight Local Access Forum: Safer Rural Roads Meeting held 8th June 2026
Notes from the meetings 08/06/26 Paul Fuller & Peter Beaven
A proposal was made to establish a working party.

The Working Party's objectives would be to address concerns over highway safety on rural roads within the Island.

- Work with residents groups and individuals with a specific interest in road safety in rural areas. Whilst the perceived speed of traffic was of concern, routing of diversions/ traffic restrictions and highway conditions during inclement weather and highway/ vegetation maintenance were seen as potential issues
- Local parish/ town/ community councils
- Local Interest Groups/ Individuals to include: cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders, runners.
- Enforcement Agencies inc. Hampshire and IW Constabulary and Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- To monitor good practice locally and elsewhere.
- To report back to the IW Local Access Forum who would consider any recommendations.

Action Points raised at the meeting included:

- Requesting an update on the West Wight Green Link?
- Requesting how Local Cycle, Walking Infrastructure Plans could feed into the West Wight Green Link?
- An update from the IW Safer Neighbourhoods Team concerning Rural Roads.
- What lessons had been learnt since the adoption of the Brading Green Lanes scheme?
- Liaison and Membership with rural road 'champions' and groups such as Community Speedwatch, Cyclewight, the IW Bridleway Group, IW Ramblers

Another meeting to be arranged in a couple of months time.

ROW & King Charles III England Coast Path Update (IOW2-10)

Kathryn Bunker is the IWC Coast Path Officer who is overseeing the Establishment of the National Trail on the Island.

IW1 East Cowes to Wootton: public consultation closed 22/10/25 the report will be considered by the Secretary of State to make a decision. It is not known if there will be a public enquiry.

IW2 Wootton to Culver Down: tender almost completed and contractor named, and The Mill Damn Wall path R86 which will have an accessible bridge – this is being contracted separately.

IW3 Culver Down to Binnel Bay: Open – any feedback for this stretch send to row@iow.gov.uk Open with diversions i.e. landslip at Mount Bay works carried out last week has resolved the problem, still has issues at Charles Wood but a permanent ECP alignment in Woods may not be possible or supported – Diversion at Shanklin Chine should show on National Trails website once it's been updated.

IW4 Binnel Bay to Chilton Chine: Grange Chine highways works completed. Maybe open in summer once Island Roads install the footbridge and signage. Anticipated completion by the end of summer 2026.

IW5 Chilton Chine to Colwell Chine: Open – any feedback for this stretch send to row@iow.gov.uk Diversion at Totland for T16 closure should show on National Trails website once it's been updated.

IW6 Colwell Chine to Hamstead Point: majority of work out to tender but contractor not appointed yet, contract needs to be started in dry months, mostly surfacing works.

IW7 Hamstead Point to Thorness Bay: at the planning stages complex works. There will be lots of new access and a huge amount of infrastructure

IW8 Thorness Bay to Gurnard Luck: contractors working for last few months, surface should be finished this week and fencing to secure agricultural land next week and path opened hopefully before summer holidays.

IW9 Gurnard Luck to Cowes: Open – any feedback for this stretch send to row@iow.gov.uk

IW10 Medina Estuary: in planning and some works being spec'd and quoted, boardwalk and trying to future proof for cycling and the lock bridge upgraded for wheelchairs.

ROW – Updates

RoW currently very busy (as always) the theme at the moment is very much paths being overgrown and as you have probably noticed the intense heat following spells of wet weather have resulted in speedy and dense vegetation growth. We are therefore tackling this with our cutting programmes and with the strimming contract.

We are also delivering our capital programme. The department continues to benefit from an improved capital budget following its inclusion in the Highways Team. This is a vital source of funding for RoW due to its very limited revenue budget.

To assist in delivering the capital programme we have just recruited a temporary operative until the end of the year. The operative is able to carry out routine maintenance tasks which frees up our maintenance and protection officers, Kelvin and Neil Morey's, time in delivering the capital programme.

We have recently completed a diversion order process at Stenbury Manor (footpaths GL54a and GL55). This was a landowner request and all fees and costs were paid for by the landowner. The end result is a much improved path for the public with stunning views. The previous path was problematic as it was between hedges with no views which got very wet and muddy – the new paths are across open fields. I would urge people to enjoy the new paths as an example of how a landowner request for a diversion can actually be very beneficial to the public.

We do have a number of temporary closures as a result of landslip and erosion where reopening is not possible – most notably Bonchurch Landslip and at Luccombe. Later this year we will need to turn our attention to the making of permanent TRO's and possibly even extinguishment in some cases. We will of course consult with the LAF on this process.

But on the subject of Bonuchurch landslip we are looking to reopen part of this as a circular route to the Wishing Seat. There is route which is considered to be outside of the active landslip zone and we are currently working on a signage scheme which will provide waymarking and interpretation (along with necessary warning signs). It is also possible that a similar circular walk will be possible on the Bonchurch side of the slip and we will be looking at this later in the year.

The signage for the Wishing Seat trail is being funded by National Landscape Access for All Grant. Other funding from that scheme has included new boardwalks at Newchurch (NC12) and also the formation of a new permissive bridleway at the Hermitgae in Whitwell. We will provide further details of this in due course, but in the meantime, we are thankful to Richard and his team for making this funding available to us.

We now have a fully operational operating system for the service, called CAMS which stands for Countryside Access Management System. This has really brought the Service into the 21st century in terms of how it deals with and records queries and complaints, and also has a mapping system which enables recoding of assets e.g. bridge, stiles, gates, signs etc. So going forward we will be able to provide reports on the data to the LAF.

Questions

National Trails Website and the England Coast Path
A question was raised as to whether the Isle of Wight Coast Path/England Coast Path will be shown on the National Trails website.
Response: As sections of the England Coast Path on the Isle of Wight are opened, and only once Natural England has made the relevant statutory instrument bringing those sections into legal effect, they will be added to the National Trails website. This means that the route will not appear as a single continuous trail until the individual sections have been formally approved and brought into force. Instead, sections will be added progressively as they become legally operational.

It was noted that National Trails is an independent organisation funded by Government to promote and provide information about England's National Trails, including the England Coast Path**.**
Website: https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/england-coast-path-south/trail-information/

Accessibility of the England Coast Path

A question was raised about how members of the public will be able to determine the accessibility of individual trail sections.
Response: At present, the priority for the Isle of Wight England Coast Path officer is the substantial workload associated with planning, establishing and opening the route. Once this work is largely complete, there may be opportunities to consider additional information for users, including the assessment and classification of route accessibility.

Kathryn advised that accessibility grading or ranking of trail sections is not currently in place, but could be considered in the future as resources and workloads permit.

It was also noted that the Isle of Wight has recently appointed a consultant to represent and oversee the Island's interests within the National Trail Partnership. This may provide opportunities to explore how accessibility information, route assessments and user guidance could be developed and presented in the future.

Members recognised that providing clear accessibility information would be valuable in helping people make informed decisions about route suitability, particularly for those with mobility impairments, wheelchair users, people using mobility scooters, families with pushchairs and others who may require more detailed information about gradients, surfaces, gates and other potential barriers.

Isle of Wight Festival and England Coast Path
A question was raised as to whether the Isle of Wight Festival has contributed funding towards the England Coast Path
It was noted that, from this year onwards and for future events, the Riverside Path has been excluded from the festival site boundary. However, despite no longer forming part of the festival footprint, the path continues to be closed around the festival period due to safety concerns identified by the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).
As a result:

- The Riverside Path will continue to be closed during the festival set-up and breakdown periods.
- The closure is expected to commence approximately 17 days before the festival opens.
- The route is expected to remain closed for approximately one week after the festival has ended.
- The justification for the closure is based on public safety concerns rather than the path forming part of the operational festival site.

It was noted that this arrangement is likely to continue for future festivals unless the Safety Advisory Group's requirements change or an alternative solution can be identified.

User Group Updates:

IW Bridleways:
Vegetation Management: Concerns were raised regarding vegetation and hedges overgrowing public bridleways and the resulting complaints from users.

It was noted that, in law, the maintenance of hedges and boundary vegetation is generally the responsibility of the adjoining landowner. However, securing compliance through enforcement can often be difficult and time-consuming.

As a goodwill gesture, the Rights of Way Service may undertake discretionary hedge cutting during the winter period, where resources allow and where it is considered beneficial to the wider public use of the route.

It was also recognised that maintaining positive working relationships with landowners is important. The Rights of Way Service frequently relies on landowners' cooperation and may require access

across private land in the future to investigate issues, carry out maintenance works, or resolve other public rights of way matters. Consequently, informal engagement and practical solutions are often preferable to formal enforcement action where appropriate.

The Rights of Way Service will therefore continue to balance its enforcement powers with a pragmatic approach, seeking voluntary cooperation from landowners wherever possible while ensuring that routes remain available and reasonably convenient for public use.

CycleWight Update Malcom Ross CycleWight has been assessing routes and infrastructure from the perspective of a wide range of users, including those using adapted cycles and cargo bikes.
Tests have been undertaken using cargo bikes through existing barriers and gateways to assess their practicality and accessibility.
The testing highlighted that some gateways and access controls can be restrictive for larger cycles, adapted bicycles and cargo bikes.
Feedback from the trials is being used to help inform future route designs and improvements, with the aim of ensuring that infrastructure is accessible to the widest possible range of users.
The importance of designing routes that accommodate not only standard bicycles but also cargo bikes, adapted cycles, mobility aids and other non-standard users

Landowner Issues and Countryside Access Concerns
A discussion took place regarding ongoing landowner concerns and the misuse of public rights of way.

- It was emphasised that cycling on public footpaths is generally not permitted unless specific cycling rights exist
- Concerns were raised about anti-social use within Parkhurst Forest, including reports of fast-moving bicycles, motorcycles and electric scooters being used in areas where they may not be authorised.
- Members felt there is a need for greater public awareness and education regarding countryside access rights and responsibilities, particularly around what activities are and are not permitted on different types of public rights of way.
- It was suggested that efforts should be made to better communicate the message about what users cannot do, such as riding motorcycles or other mechanically propelled vehicles on routes where vehicular rights do not exist and using electric scooters in areas where they are not legally permitted.

Action: Invite representatives from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary to attend the next meeting. Extend an invitation to Donna Jones, Police and Crime Commissioner, to discuss enforcement issues, anti-social behaviour and the misuse of public rights of way and countryside access routes.

Deleted Footpaths Still Appearing on Ordnance Survey Mapping
Mark Earp raised a concern regarding public paths that have been legally extinguished / stopped up, diverted or otherwise removed from the Definitive Map, but which continue to appear on Ordnance Survey mapping and other mapping products. This can cause confusion and paths which no longer carry public rights may still attract use if they continue to appear on published maps or digital mapping applications. Definitive Mapping updates can take time to filter through to Ordnance Survey and other third-party mapping providers.

Action: Mark to provide examples of paths that have been deleted or legally extinguished but are still shown on Ordnance Survey mapping, so that the issue can be investigated further and, where appropriate, raised with the relevant mapping provider.
Update: Mark sent information about Footpath C31 in Chale – the route has not been extinguished from the definitive map but there is an anomaly in the line of the walked path.

Ramblers Update

The Donate-a-Gate Scheme is currently being reviewed and updated. The revised approach will promote the use of the least restrictive access option appropriate to the route, considering:

- Gaps where feasible.
- Self-closing gates.
- Kissing gates only where necessary. Where a kissing gate must be installed, attention should be given to ensuring adequate space around gate posts and access points to maximise accessibility for users.
- Consideration is also being given to replacing the existing oak donor plaques with more durable stainless-steel plaques.

It was noted that some routes have limitations recorded within the Definitive Statement, specifying the type of structure present, such as a gate or stile. Any proposals to alter these structures may therefore require negotiation and agreement with the relevant parties.

The importance of balancing accessibility improvements with historical records, landowner requirements and site-specific constraints was recognised.

The scheme continues to be successful, and it was noted that the 300th gate installation will be reached soon, representing a significant milestone for the project.

National Landscapes Update

- A grant of £110,000 has been secured through the National Landscapes programme. The funding is to be split approximately equally between the Rights of Way Service and wider National Landscape projects.
- There will be a scheme to deliver improvements at Thorness, including works to raise a bridge over a culvert to help alleviate flooding issues and improve the ECP route keeping walkers off and away from the surrounding land.
- An update was also provided on the West Wight Landscape Partnership project. An application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund was unsuccessful. Alternative funding opportunities are now being explored, and a revised bid is being prepared for submission to another funding programme.

Any Other Business:

None

Next Meeting

Branstone Farm – **Wednesday 11 November 2026** 2pm – 4pm