

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 24th September, 2018.

Present: Councillor S.T. Edwards (Chairman); Councillors Mrs. S.M. Hanks and N.C. Thomas (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Councillor Ms. N. Clarke (Bridgend County Borough Council), Mr. J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates), Mr. B. Acott (Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast), Ms. G.M. Barter (Natural Resources Wales), Mr. N.A. Lewis (Glamorgan Wildlife Trust), Mrs. H. March and Councillor R. Gant (One Voice Wales).

Also present: Mr. B. Guy (Operational Manager), Mr. P. Lock (Glamorgan Heritage Coast Site Ranger), Mr. S. Pickering (Team Leader Countryside Services), Mr. G. Teague (Public Rights of Way Officer), Ms. N. Hollins (Vale Tourism Officer) and Mrs. A. Brown (Communities Directorate, Bridgend County Borough Council).

(a) Apology for Absence –

This was received from Councillor J.C. Bird (Vale of Glamorgan Council).

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April, 2018 be approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that comments made by Councillor Clarke about the conditions of roads accessing the coastal path, were more to do with the general conditions of rounds around Porthcawl.

(c) Presentation by Site Ranger, Mr. Paul Lock – Achievements and Issues Since the Last Meeting –

In commenting on the work since the previous meeting, Mr. Lock outlined the following:

- In terms of the warm weather, the summer had been the best since 1976. This had meant that there had been lots of visitors, even during mid-week. As a result, the Coastguard had received lots of call outs and had been very busy.
- The Rangers had been busy with Rights of Way work, which had been aided with the help of volunteers. Much of the work would not have been completed had it not been for the efforts of the volunteers. Again, volunteers from Lloyds Bank had helped out and also had provided a charitable donation.

- Work had been undertaken to fix a bridge in Cwm Colhuw, a new bridge constructed to improve access towards Aberthaw, new steps added to improve access at Cwm Bach and fencing added near Llantwit Major.
- The sunshine had helped vegetation to grow, so there had been a lot of pressure on keeping paths clear. One positive from the large amount of dry and sunny weather was that there was less grass to cut.
- A number of events had been hosted over the summer months, such as a wild life hunt with experts to assess how well wild life was doing. Also, other events included rock pooling, which was open to the public for a small fee. It was noticed that most of the children that attended were not local. It was therefore good to see that word of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast had reached further than expected.
- During the summer there had been a lot of school geography visits. This was because geography was a big part of the school curriculum. Due to the hot weather some schools had had to cancel their visits.
- There had been a number of dead sharks washed up on the beaches. This also included six dolphins. These had been following the mackerel along the coastline.
- With regard to the lifeguard hut located at Southerdown, Mr. Lock advised that this had been replaced.

A member asked what was the impact of wild life as a result of the very hot summer. Mr. Lock stated that it was more natural to have very hot summers and cold winters, so there was not a major impact.

The Chairman expressed thanks for all the hard work of staff and volunteers.

(d) Presentation by Nia Hollins, Principal Tourism and Marketing Officer –

Ms. Hollins provide an update on the work around tourism. She began by providing an overview of the work of her team, which included promoting the individual identify for each of the key tourist destinations in the Vale. These being, Cowbridge and the rural area, Penarth, Llantwit Major and Barry. Key elements of the work of the team included:

- Promoting and supporting tourist events
- Creative Rural Communities
- Membership of Visit Wales Communication Groups and the Destination Management Group
- Accessing funding to promote tourism in the Vale.

In terms of funding, Ms. Hollins advised that the team had a small budget in which to promote tourism. This meant that a lot of events were funded via external sources. She went on to refer to the role of the South East Wales Regional Tourism Forum and the Destination Management Group which brought together the work of ten Local Authorities.

A key element of this was a Destination Management Partnership, which brought together many different public, private and voluntary sector organisations. This Partnership had recently agreed a new action plan which had included seven key priorities:

1. To improve the range of accommodation provision;
2. To develop high quality events;
3. To raise the profile of the Vale of Glamorgan;
4. To ensure that visitor data is fit for purpose;
5. To maintain growth in the value of the tourism industry;
6. To achieve maximum value through partnership working;
7. To maintain quality provision and infrastructure of the physical environment.

Ms. Hollins then went on to refer to the STEAM report for 2017. This was a tourism economic impact modelling process which showed the value of tourism to the Vale of Glamorgan. The report for 2017 showed:

- The total economic impact of tourism was £236.81m. This represented a 4.2% increase on 2016.
- Total number of visitors was 4.16 million, with most of these being day visitors.
- Total visitor days was 4.62 million, which was a 4.1% increase on 2016.
- The number of Full Time Equivalent jobs reported was 2,997.

The Group was then provided with a brief overview of the 2016 visitor survey. This had shown that:

- Most visitors were from Wales, with just 1% from overseas;
- Most visitor groups were either family groups with young children or couples;
- There was a high proportion of day visitors (95%);
- 4% were on a short break and the average number of nights stayed was 6, which was equal to the Welsh average;
- The main reason for visiting was to enjoy the landscape, countryside and beaches, which was higher than the Welsh average. This highlighted that less people were visiting to see the historic sites;
- In terms of satisfaction rates, out of 10, 77% of visitors scored the Vale 9 or 10. A further 22% gave the moderate score of between 5 and 8. Only 1% were dissatisfied with their visit.
- 45% of visitors indicated that their trip exceeded expectations;
- 3% said that they would not return, while 95% indicated that they would;
- 91% of visitors indicated that they would recommend the Vale as a place to visit.

Ms. Hollins, in commenting on the findings, stated that it could be said that most visitors were very happy, but there was always room for improvement.

With regard to the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, Ms. Hollins advised that there were a number of projects and she highlighted the following:

- The work undertaken with Creative Rural Communities
- The marketing of events
- The promotion of camp sites
- The development of tourist information points (TIPs), which included the introduction of new digital TIPs
- Pop-up events
- The Dog Friendly scheme – Paws in the Vale
- The use of the business units and
- Infrastructure such as car parks.

Ms. Hollins advised that all these were externally funded.

In relation to partnership working, Councillor N. Thomas queried how involved were Town and Community Councils. In reply, Ms. Hollins advised that representatives from the Town Councils sat on the Destination Management Partnership. In relation to this, Mr. Acott, Chairman of the Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, was advised that he was welcome to inform his local Community Council of the Partnership Group and that a web link would be shared with him.

Councillor Thomas then queried the introduction of Control Orders for Dogs. In reply, Ms. Hollins advised that there had been a huge amount of debate on this and a final decision had yet to be made. Mr. Guy added that some elements of the proposals were being reconsidered.

Mrs. March queried the impact of proposals which could result in the introduction of car parking charges. The Group was advised that the current review did not include coastal car parks, with the most likely impact being on local residents. In commenting on the principle of charging for car parking, Ms. Hollins stated that it would be great if parking was free, but money was needed to ensure facilities such as toilets were of good quality and well maintained. Councillor Hanks commented that cash machines were not helpful from the point of view of carrying enough change. She also added that she felt that a lot of local people were now not going to the beaches as parking was too expensive.

In response to a query regarding TIPs, Ms. Hollins confirmed that there were 56 information points throughout the Vale, of which 8 were digital.

(e) Verbal Update on the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Update on the Welsh Government Consultation “Access Within the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources” –

Mr. Gwyn Teague provided a verbal update on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and the Welsh Government Consultation “Access Within the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources”. He advised the Group of the following points:

- WG proposals to expand access to paths and bridleways had been put on hold due to Brexit;

- For improvement works at Monkash, Natural Resources Wales had carried out an assessment and had requested a number of changes. As a result, the scheme was being revised which meant that this would not be completed until next year;
- Maintenance work at Cwm Bach had progressed with new steps installed to improve access. In addition, due to cliff erosion, work to set back the path at Fontygary had been completed;
- NRW had also completed its quality survey of the Coastal Path. The only issue identified related to the number of structures which had the logos fixed in place. This was 72%, so had been highlighted as an area for improvement.

The Group asked for an update on the alternative route for Summerhouse Point. Mr. Teague advised that there were two issues. The first was around negotiations with the land owner and the second was access to the path, for which an application would be made.

Councillor Thomas commented on the likelihood of cliff falls, stating that it would be worthwhile if more signs and public information was displayed. In reply, Mr. Teague advised that cliff falls were very difficult to predict, but the Councillor's point would be taken on board.

(f) Verbal Update on the Draft Parking Strategy for the Vale of Glamorgan – Mr. Bob Guy, Operational Manager - Regeneration –

Mr. Guy provided a verbal update on Council proposals around the introduction of car parking charges. This however did not include parking at Barry Island or Ogmere-by-Sea. Mr. Guy advised that consultation on this would end this Friday, with the last drop in session arranged for today from 3.00 p.m. Following this, the subject would be considered by Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting with final proposals going back to Cabinet for determination.

The Group heard that there had been some issues with one of the drop in sessions, where it was felt that officers' knowledge of the proposals were limited and maps were not available. Mr. Guy stated that he was aware of these issues. He also added that an important element for the proposals was around increasing turnover.

(g) Matters to be Raised by Bridgend County Borough Council –

The Group was advised that Bridgend did not have any matters that it wished to raise at the meeting.

(h) Matters Raised by Natural Resources Wales –

Ms. Barter from Natural Resources Wales informed the Group that they were currently undergoing a restructure and the relevant officer who would attend future meetings would be determined over the next month.

(i) Matters Raised by the Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast –

Mr. Acott, Chairman of the Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast, commented that he had attended the funeral of John Hartman, who was one of the founders of the Heritage Coast. The funeral was well attended and a fitting tribute was delivered.

Mr. Acott also advised that a legal agreement would be put in place allowing vehicle access to the former Sea Watch Centre. This process was ongoing but was also very slow.

Mr. Acott requested whether more advertising of the waymarkers in St. Athan could be carried out. The waymarkers were also concealed, so a request was made to clear the overgrowth.

(j) Date of Next Meeting –

To be arranged.