

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 15th March, 2019.

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

Also present: Mr. B. Guy, Mr. P. Locke, Mr. S. Pickering and Mr. G. Teague.

(a) Apology for Absence -

This was received from Mr. J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates) and Mr. N.A. Lewis (Glamorgan Wildlife Trust).

(b) Minutes -

AGREED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 24th September, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Presentation by Ms. Nicola Sumner-Smith, Senior Rural Regeneration Officer - Coastal Activities Feasibility Study -

Ms. Sumner-Smith, the Senior Rural Regeneration Officer for the Vale of Glamorgan Council stated that she wanted to outline a piece of work undertaken by her team in relation to the Coastal Activities Feasibility Study. She stated that this study was wider than the coastal area and looked at other parts of the Vale such as Lavernock and the rural communities close to the coast lines.

Ms. Sumner-Smith introduced Mr. Paul Donovan who was the Chair of the Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation (WATO), the membership of which included a range of bodies.

Ms. Sumner-Smith stated that staff from the Vale's Creative Rural Communities Team had been tasked to identify the opportunities that existed for outdoor activities and how organisations could utilise the excellent natural assets that existed within the Vale. This was in order to increase visitors and encourage new business and employment opportunities.

In terms of WATO, Ms. Sumner-Smith stated its key aim was to support the sustainable development of the adventure activity sector throughout Wales. It had five key priorities:

- An increasingly sustainable approach to the provision of adventure activities, through regional environmental charter agreements.

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- Enhancing opportunities for businesses that populate the sector.
- Informing the need for the development of effectively managed and sustainable outdoor recreation facilities.
- Wide communications with the adventure tourism sector across Wales.
- Supporting the development of sustainable access solutions and increased provisions for outdoor recreation.

The Coastal Activity Feasibility Study included an on line survey that received 85 responses, a number of stakeholder consultations and was attended by 50 individuals from a cross cutting range of organisations. In addition site audits had been carried out to assess what was practical. Following this feasibility studies of quick wins and mid-term projects would be carried and this would lead up to a showcase event which would outline to the public what new business opportunities activities were available. The Group noted it was envisioned for the showcase event to be held during June of this year, with St. Donats being considered to host the event. The Group requested if information in relation to this could be shared with the Members.

In terms of the survey, and stakeholder consultations, the following responses were received:

- Community outdoor club organisations - 20%
- Activity business - 17%
- Freelance instructors - 4%
- Activity centre - 1%
- Local authority - 16%
- Conservation body - 3%
- Other public sector - 13%
- Other private sector - 12%
- Recreational user - 16%
- Other - 19%.

In response to a question 'Do you currently provide adventure activities in the Vale of Glamorgan', and 30% indicated that they did not. Of the organisations, 68% advised that they could deliver more/different activities in the Vale of Glamorgan.

In terms of what was preventing the delivery of more activities, organisations had outlined the following:

- Limited beaches
- Funding/finance
- Tides and pebbles
- Rights of Way
- Cliffs
- Footfall
- Access
- Sea swell
- Poor marketing
- River

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- Unsafe parking
- Uncertainty.

Some of the key activities that were identified as possible for the Vale of Glamorgan included surfing, kayaking, canoeing, coast steering, open water swimming, rock climbing, paragliding, guided walks, nature walks, historic walks, mountain biking and rock pooling.

With regard to the actions that organisations required in order to develop activities, these included the following:

- Better showers,
- New accommodation,
- Better parking
- Improved toilet facilities,
- Permission from land owners,
- More funding;
- Better marketing,
- Central booking facilities and
- Better access to facilities.

The survey had also outlined what other aspects did organisations consider when looking to develop new activities. These included the:

- Landscape,
- Terrain,
- Current use,
- Landowners,
- Site infrastructure,
- Designations,
- Features and
- Conservation and wildlife.

Finally, Ms. Sumner-Smith referred to the creation of a map which outlined the locations of all activities undertaken in the Vale. This provided information and handy hints and tips about which activities were close by. In addition, Ms. Sumner-Smith raised the point of the creation of a central adventure hub which would be where visitors could book activities and receive information. She stated that it would be useful for this to be located by a train station in order to improve access. Ms. Sumner-Smith also referred to a showcase event which would be held in order to inform the public of the new activities that were being provided.

Mrs. Heather March stated that she could not see anything in relation to horse riding. In reply, Ms. Sumner-Smith stated that this was only because the subject of horse riding was not raised during the consultation. She stated that there was not a pre-prescribed list and she was sure that horse riding would be considered. In addition, Gwyn Teague, the Rights of Way Officer for the Vale of Glamorgan Council stated that a bid for funding had been made to Welsh Government in order to consider the

No.

feasibility of new bridle routes. It was hoped that confirmation of the bid would be received over the next few weeks.

The Chairman queried whether the paragliding activity would be progressed. In reply, Ms. Sumner-Smith stated that discussions with the company were still ongoing and the key issue was around permission with land owners. In addition, the Group noted that this activity would only be appropriate for the more experienced paragliders of a certain level, but they would also be able to offer tandem flights. Members also noted that the area being proposed for paragliding was a unique site and it was suggested that people would travel and far and away.

(d) Presentation by Site Ranger, Mr. Paul Locke - Achievements and Issues Since the Last Meeting -

In commenting on the works of the previous meeting, Mr. Locke outlined the following:

- The winter period had allowed the team to carry out a lot of conservation and Rights of Way improvement work.
- The help of volunteers was a massive asset and the team could not manage without their input. Mr. Locke praised the work that volunteers had carried out in the gardens in Southerndown and he stated that they did a fantastic job.
- A lot of Rights of Way work had been carried out with a number of problem routes opened up.
- For conservation work, this related to grass cutting in order to allow flowers to grow and provided a good habitat for thistles. It was vital to clear up grass cuttings as they would harm floral habitats.
- The Heritage Coast had received good publicity through the BBC Weatherman Walking show and in addition there had been a number of other tv programmes filmed along the coastline.
- A number of species of butterflies had benefited from the work of the team and the weather had generally been very good apart from a few days that had held up some work.
- The change in weather could have a dramatic effect on cliff falls and Mr. Locke provided a number of photographs to illustrate this point.
- A report for Natural Resources Wales had highlighted the need to bring up to standards certain routes. These were likely to be in relation to signs and way markers fitted to direct people. As result Paul and the Team had made sure that the routes were properly marked.
- For the summer months, it had been planned for a new pond to be developed which would encourage greater school visits. The pond would also have an information board that had been provided through Welsh Government Grant Funding.
- The half-term school holiday had been very busy, with the good weather encouraging people to visit.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Locke for the update and he suggested whether a letter of thanks could be sent to all volunteers.

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AGREED - T H A T a letter of thanks and appreciation be sent to all volunteers who support the Glamorgan Heritage Coast.

(e) Rights of Way Improvement Plan - Verbal Update - Mr. Gwyn Teague, Public Rights of Way Officer -

Mr. Gwyn Teague provided an update on the work underway in order to update the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Mr. Teague stated that the current Plan had been devised over 10 years ago and was due for an update. This outlined how the Council would manage its rights of way routes.

Mr. Teague advised that the Local Access Forum had recently discussed an updated Plan which had been split into three elements. The Local Access Forum agreed that the vision of the Strategy Statement remained relevant but there were a few amendments to the principle of the document. These included the need to have greater reference to the ability for all to access Rights of Way paths and there was a caveat that maintenance and path clearance work was limited by resources. In addition, it was agreed by the Local Access Forum that greater reference should be made to technology and that sustainable development should acknowledge the change in public policy.

Mr. Teague advised that the draft Improvement Plan would be subject to a 12 week consultation which would then be brought back to the Glamorgan Heritage Coast for comment.

(f) Verbal Update on the Coastal Access Improvement Grant - Mr. Gwyn Teague, Public Rights of Way Officer -

In beginning his update, Mr. Teague referred to the completion of maintenance work at Cwm Bach, Llantwit Major and works undertaken following a cliff fall at Fontygary. He also referred to the creation of a path in Gileston and the reprofiling of a path at Lavernock.

In relation to funding for 2019/20, he stated that the Coastal Access Improvement Programme was a scheme funded by the Welsh Government, via Natural Resources Wales and delivered through local authorities. The current programme would run until March, 2021 with £200,000 allocated for 2019. From this, the Council could bid for money in order to improve the coastal paths.

In order to assess the quality of paths, a survey had been undertaken by Natural Resources Wales which related to the number and quality of structures and furniture's along with a number of issues identified. The key issue to have come out was the high percentage of structures that did not meet the required standards, which was mainly due to missing signs and logos. The improvements required had been put into a regional maintenance plan which covered the period to the end of

No.

March 2020. Mr. Teague advised that Paul Locke and his team had been out and about to address the issues.

In terms of projected bids from the Welsh Government funding, Mr. Teague referred to possible path improvements at Monkash, the raising of the path around Aberthaw Power Station and improvements to the path east of Nash Point. He also stated that funding would be sought for Cwm Colhuw to improve the surface and also to progress installation of new fences around Gileston Beach. He also stated that there were three bids that were outside of the Heritage Coast and these related to Lavernock, Porthkerry and Sully.

(g) Verbal Update on Proposed Section 106 Improvements at Ogmore by Sea -

Mr. Gwyn Teague provided an update on the £45k Section 106 money for Ogmore-by-Sea improvements. He stated that this money would be used to upgrade gates, as the surface of these gates were regularly flooded. In addition, new steps would be created on the way to the beach and repairs would be undertaken to stone walls.

The Group noted that replacement benches were being considered which could be made from recycled plastics which had a longer life.

(h) 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. The Group stated that it was concerned that no update had been provided for some time. These comments would be taken by to the appropriate officer.

(i) Matters to be Raised by Natural Resources Wales -

Ms. Barter from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) offered appreciation to improvement and conservation works that had been carried out. She informed the Group that the staff restructure had been carried, and the new representative from the NRW would attend the next meeting.

(j) Matters to be Raised by the Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast -

Mr. Acott, Chairman of the Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast, commented that an adopted footpath sign in Llantwit Major required repair. He also referred to the Seawatch Centre and the ongoing legal saga, and the recurring vandalism of the Centre. Mr. Acott also referred to a letter from Alun Cairns, MP, in relation to Nash Point Lighthouse and restrictions being imposed on public visitors. Mr. Guy advised that he would look into this matter. Mr. Acott also mentioned the minutes of the previous meeting, stating that his comments should have been attributed to John Hardman and not John Hartman.

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(k) Chairman's announcement

The Chairman thanked Mr. Bob. Guy for all his hard work and commitment over the years, and the Chairman wished him all the best for his retirement. Mr. Bob Guy thanked the Chairman, and he introduced Mr. Phil Chappell who had been appointed as his successor.