

## **GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP**

Minutes of a meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2023.

Present: Councillor C. Stallard (Chair); Councillor E.J. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair); Councillors A.M. Ernest, R. Fisher, C.P. Franks, S.M. Hanks and J. Lynch-Wilson (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Mr. T. Davies (Dunraven Estates), Ms. L. Hancock (Natural Resources Wales), Mr. J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates), Councillor N. Farr (Bridgend County Borough Council) and Councillor A. Trousdell (One Voice Wales).

Also present: Mr. P. Chappell, Mr. D. Hunt, Mrs. M. Hollins, Mr. P. Lock and Mr. S. Pickering (Officers – Vale of Glamorgan Council).

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Mr. R. McLaggan (Merthyr Mawr Estate), Mr. I. Robinson (Vale of Glamorgan Council) and Ms. M. Lee (Natural Resources Wales).

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Update and Overview, Achievements and Site Update, Since last Meeting (Mr. P. Lock) –

Mr. Lock (Site Ranger) provided an update of activities since the last meeting held in September 2022.

Mr. Lock stated that over the past six months there have been a significant focus on biodiversity and in particular a large number of visits from schools which, although welcomed, did present some significant challenges. In particular, a number of schools had had to cancel their visits at the last minute due to the increased costs of hiring buses, so this had been challenging from an administrative point of view.

Mr. Lock also stated that the car park at the Southerndown Centre was a challenge as payments were being received on a cash only basis. This had meant that many visitors that did not have cash, had looked for alternative places to park. Therefore, Mr. Lock stated that more enforcement was required as many visitors were parking in inappropriate places.

Another challenge over the past six months was the inclement weather which had meant that there was a lot more grass to cut and which also meant that undertaking the cuts was more difficult due to soggy ground. Storms had also caused issues, particularly during the period of three days when there was a high tide which had resulted in the car park being flooded. The flood had washed up significant debris including lots of plastic and rubbish which meant that the Rangers had to clean up

the material over three or four days. As a result, the Council had been able to invest grant money into a new cleaning machine which would mean that future cleaning operations would be easier and safer.

A particularly enjoyable piece of work for the Rangers was habitat management and so the Rangers had been focusing on countryside areas away from farm land in order to help wild flowers grow. Additional habitat work included the maintenance of meadow land which would help specific rare species. The Rangers had a remote machine which could help with the cutting of grass which could access steep slopes and so was safer for the Rangers.

Councillor A.M. Ernest queried whether litter remained a particular problem. In reply Mr. Lock stated that nothing had changed since the last meeting and there was a need to ensure that people were more responsible when it came to the disposal of waste materials.

Councillor S.M. Hanks queried whether the lifeguard station portacabin issues had been resolved. In reply Mr. Lock stated that the station had been affected by high tides and but it was now bolted down and was more secure.

In respect of the car parking and payment methods, Mr. J. Golunski stated that card payment was available, but the machine was affected by poor internet access. In response, Mr. S. Pickering stated that the Council had received a grant to improve internet connection and the options to improve the car park were being investigated. A number of further improvement options were available, such as the introduction of ANPR and a gate to close off the car park late at night. This would hopefully reduce the issues around antisocial behaviour.

AGREED – T H A T the update provided by Mr. Lock be noted and the Group's thanks and appreciation passed on to the Rangers.

(d) Update on Public Rights of Way Work (Mr. D. Hunt) –

Mr. Hunt, Public Rights of Way Officer, provided a brief update on the maintenance work undertaken over the past six months. He stated that grass clearing was being undertaken on an ongoing basis and a path located in St. Donats had been pushed back due to the proximity to the cliff edge.

With regard to new furniture, the Council had upgraded a number of step-over stiles to a more modern design which was more accessible and friendly to people with a disability. Mr. Hunt also referred to a run, walk or crawl event that was taking place across the Vale of Glamorgan which would attract several hundred participants.

In reply to a query regarding funding, Mr. S. Pickering stated that Welsh Government provided each Local Authority with a set amount for maintenance and there was also a central pot from which Councils could bid for additional funding. Several bids had been rejected by Welsh Government so certain issues would remain until funding was identified.

Councillor A.M. Ernest stated that it would be useful to gather visitor numbers for the coastal path in order to reconcile against the funding received. In reply, Ms. E. Hancocks (Natural Resources Wales) stated that there were ways to collect visitor information, for example extrapolating data from the number of cars in the car parks and information available via Google maps. This was an area that required more work. Mr. Lock issued a word of caution when it came to comparing visitor numbers to other parts of Wales as certain areas such as the Pembrokeshire coast attracted a greater number of visitors over a larger area. Mr. Lock also stated that the current funding arrangements were due to cease in 2025 and it would be interesting to see what the new funding arrangements from Welsh Government would look like.

The Group discussed the possibility of putting using the Glamorgan Heritage Coast logo on more way markers and more signs to show visitors that there were other parts to see that were more inland from the Coastal Path. It was noted that use of the Glamorgan Heritage logo could only be used on actual physical sections of the coastal path. The use and supply of ceramic signs would be looked into.

AGREED – T H A T the update from Mr. D. Hunt be noted.

(e) Update on the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre (Mr. P. Chappell) –

Mr. Chappell (Operational Manager – Regeneration) provided a brief summary of the update position with regard to the future of the Heritage Coast Centre in Southerndown. Mr. Chappell stated that the Centre closed to visitors a number of years ago and the Council had been working with Dunraven Estates to look at the possible usages of this building. A masterplan had been devised which would retain a Council presence and also using part of the building as a café / restaurant. Concept drawings had been devised by an architect and these would be submitted through the planning process.

(f) Presentation of the Positive Effect Tourism has had on Local Businesses and the Economy (Ms. N. Hollins) –

Ms. Hollins (Principal Tourism and Marketing Officer) had been invited to the Group in order to present an overview of the impact that tourism had had on local businesses and the economy.

Ms. Hollins stated that Visit the Vale project had split the Vale of Glamorgan into four distinct areas, these being Penarth, Llantwit Major (including the Glamorgan Heritage Coast), Barry and Cowbridge. She stated that it was very important for the Council to promote these areas and their distinct offerings in order to attract visitors. The Council made large use of social media and digital platforms in order to attract visitors. This included posts being placed on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. At present the Council had 23,000 followers but the use of social media usually reached 75,000 readers.

The Council funded various programmes in order to attract visitors such as the Sense of Place programmes and various pop-up events. Partnership working was also important and this included the Addo Campaign, which was a campaign aimed at visitors having respect for local towns and communities. The Council also worked with Visit Southern Wales which was a body that included ten Local Authorities in Wales and the Council also worked with the tourist trade to undertake promotional activities and advertising of events around which videography and photography were very important.

An important piece of work was the around responsible marketing. This meant that there would be very little promotion during busy periods, for example, at the height of summer. During those periods, the Council would promote lesser-known activities or areas such as Hensol forest.

A main focus of the Council was that as it was recognised that catering for the needs of visitors was expensive, it was important for visitors to spend money to assist and grow the local economies. Therefore, visitors needed to know that there were places to stay and eat.

The Group was advised that every 3 or 4 years an accommodation assessment would be carried out. The latest assessment had found that since 2019, there were now 3 times more self-catering places to stay with around 118 Airbnb locations across the Vale of Glamorgan.

It was reported that the latest Wales visitor summary report undertaken by Welsh Government indicated that the total value of the tourism industry across the Vale of Glamorgan in 2019 had an approximate worth of £275m. This was prior to Covid, and the value for 2021 had reduced by 29% to £209m. Data had also indicated that visitor numbers, stays, day visitors and jobs had all decreased since 2019.

From the perspective of new Government legislation, the Group was advised that the second home tax, could allow Councils to increase the rate of tax paid for empty homes to increase occupancy rates. In addition, there was currently legislation being considered around creating a licensing regime for all tourist accommodation, which from the Council's perspective would be beneficial in order to better understand the tourism market and make up in the Vale of Glamorgan. There had also been a lot of talk in the press regarding the Tourism Tax on visitors.

Ms. L. Hancocks (Natural Resources Wales) commented that the update was fantastic and asked if this could be provided on an annual basis. Ms. Hancocks also queried how the Council's website fed into Visit the Vale's website, and she commented that there was an opportunity to undertake promotional work of the Heritage Coast to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2025. In reply, Ms. Hollins agreed that an update would be provided annually which would also contain information relating to empty homes, and she agreed that promotional work celebrating 50 years would be considered. With regard to Visit the Vale's website, it was advised that this was an integral part of the Council's webpage, which contained links to access further visitor information for the 4 areas of the Vale of Glamorgan.

With regard to the new regulations around licensing and new standards, Councillor A.E. Ernest queried if most of Airbnb providers were aware of the changes. In reply, Ms. Hollins stated that most would ask for Council support but there were some that the Council were not in contact with. The Council would put out communication of any new changes, but the easiest form was posts on social media and in particular a Facebook page for members of the tourism trade.

AGREED – T H A T an update on the benefits of tourism be provided on an annual basis.

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

It was agreed for the Group's Terms of Reference to be sent to Councillor N. Farr.

It was also suggested that the possibility of a Vale representative joining Bridgend's Heritage Coast Group would be explored by Democratic Services.

(h) Matters to be Raised by Natural Resources Wales (Liz Hancocks) –  
Vale of Glamorgan Coastal Community Capacity Building Fund Project Update –

Ms. L. Hancocks provided an update on the Vale of Glamorgan Coastal Community Capacity Building Fund Project. For the initial stage, Welsh Government had allocated £20k in funding, which had been utilised to procure specialist consultancy support in order to look at 3 specific areas. These being:

- Partnership Development – it was noted that a meeting had been held with partner agencies, to explain some of the opportunities for the Vale of Glamorgan.
- Community Engagement – 3 engagement events had been arranged to look at the nature of the project as well as some of the key challenges. A report of the discussions and outcomes of these sessions would be shared.
- Nature Recovery – this included the bringing together of ecological experts and evidence.

The Group noted that further funding was not guaranteed, but it was still very important to bring environmental and ecological aspects together.

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

The Chair advised that the Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast was due to meet on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 so that it's role and membership could be reviewed. Therefore, if anyone knew of any persons interested in joining, please could they contact Gareth Davies in Democratic Services so that their details could be passed on.

(j) Date of Next Meeting –

To be arranged.