

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 12th April, 2024.

Present: Councillor C. Stallard (Chair); Councillor E.J. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair), Councillors A.M. Ernest, R. Fisher, C.P. Franks and S.M. Hanks (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Ms. L. Hancocks and Mr. R. Paddock (Natural Resources Wales), Mr. R. Sheppard (Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast), J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates), Councillor A. Trousdell (One Voice Wales) and Mr. R. Davies (Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales).

Also present: Mr. D. Hunt, Mr. P. Lock, Mr. S. Pickering and I. Robinson (Officers – Vale of Glamorgan Council).

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillor J. Lynch-Wilson (Vale of Glamorgan Council), Councillor N. Farr (Bridgend County Borough Council) and T. Davies (Crown Estates).

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Update on Work Undertaken on the Heritage Coast by the Countryside Rangers – Paul Lock, Site Ranger, Glamorgan Heritage Coast –

Mr. Lock, Site Ranger, provided an update since the previous meeting held on 13th October, 2023. Mr. Lock advised the Group that:

- The winter conservation and access work had been heavily impacted due to the extreme weather and flooding. The challenges presented by the weather had made it more difficult to fix and repair defects and there had been issues of increased water flows which had caused damages to paths and rights of way routes.
- The Rangers had undertaken a lot of work in terms of footpath improvements and fitting new kissing gates as well as improving drainage, not just on the Heritage Coast but all around the Vale.
- In total about 120 kissing gates were fitted during 2023.
- Some other challenges facing the Rangers had been alleviated through funding provided from the Shared Prosperity Fund and that money had helped to improve the linkages between communities.
- Funding had also assisted with the replacement or installing of six bridges across the Vale of Glamorgan.

- Rangers had also carried out a significant amount of habitat management work. That work had been assisted through the tracking of cows and cattle with a global positioning system which meant that the Team could identify the areas where the cattle were grazing.
- Additional habitat management work had been undertaken through funding provided by Natural Resources Wales that had allowed rare species of flowers to grow which would assist species such as butterflies.

Mr. S. Pickering referred to the impact of new machinery provided through the local nature partnership which meant that the cutting of grass on steep inclines could be done remotely and was therefore easier for the Rangers.

Ms. L. Hancocks (Natural Resources Wales) expressed appreciation to Mr. Lock and the other Rangers for their work and efforts around habitat management.

The Chair queried whether there was any progress in relation to the proposed new developments for the Heritage Coast Centre. In reply, Mr. J. Golunski stated that design work was still ongoing but there were some issues to address first such as the need to tackle surface water and drainage. Mr. I. Robinson (Head of Sustainable Development) stated that improvements to the Heritage Coast Centre should be seen through the bigger picture and improvements to the car park which would likely lead to further benefits such as increased footfall.

In terms of the involvement of volunteer groups, Mr. Lock stated that there were currently two groups of volunteers that were assisting with the maintenance of the gardens but there were also other groups that would assist across the Heritage Coast during the summer months.

The Chair stated that the toilet block required attention. In reply, Mr. Golunski stated that the block was being reprofiled through grant money with work due to be started shortly and likely to be completed by May 2025. The block was regularly affected by flooding.

(d) Update on Welsh Government Coastal Access Improvement Grant 2023/24 and Grant Proposals for 2024/25 – David Hunt, Countryside Access Manager –

Mr. Hunt (Countryside Access Manager) provided a brief update on the works undertaken through the Coastal Access Improvement Grant. Mr. Hunt referred to the rollback of Path No. 8 near St. Donats which had resulted in a new route further away from the edge of the cliff. In addition, the funding had been used to rollback Paths 5 and 6 which meant that the three sections of St. Donats had been completed.

Coastal Access Funding had also been used to improve the eastern section of Summerhouse Bay which was also at risk due to cliff erosion. The western side would also have to be rolled back and an agreement was in place in principal with the land owner but funding was awaiting confirmation.

In addition, branding, signs and way-markers had been approved with the introduction of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast logo.

Mr. Hunt also referred to the Access Improvement Grant which had been awarded by Natural Resources Wales in order to improve paths. A pilot project had been launched to look at how paths and routes were promoted and two routes in the Vale of Glamorgan had been identified. The pilot project would survey and grade difficult terrain and that would be publicised on the Council's website in order to assist walkers and those with disabilities. The two routes identified, the first being at Lavernock and the second from Gileston to Llantwit Major beach.

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

As no Members from Bridgend County Borough Council were present, no matters were raised.

(f) Matters to be Raised by Natural Resources Wales –

Ms. L. Hancocks provided a brief update on the Glamorgan Coastal Community Capacity Building Fund project. She advised the Group that a Project Development Officer was due to start in post imminently. Once in post the Project Development Officer would be looking to create links and hold engagement sessions with communities, groups and stakeholders.

The key elements of the fund included the holding of forums to consider how nature flourished and adapted to climate change. The second element was engagement which was something that the Project Development Officer would pick up and would enable the project to understand the needs of communities, particularly in relation to sustainable development. The third element was nature recovery which would highlight some of the challenges, particularly as the previous 18 months were the wettest on record so there were major issues and impacts following climate change.

The Group agreed for the Project Development Officer to provide an update report at its meeting scheduled for September / October.

The Group also welcomed Mr. R. Paddock, who had been invited to give an update on the planting of shoredock plants in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Mr. Paddock outlined:

- Natural Resources Wales had allocated funding for the reintroduction of shoredock into Wales;
- Shoredock was a coastal plant that was very rare and which needed fresh water and stable ground in order to grow;
- Human presence and climate change had caused the species to decline;
- The project to restore shoredock had identified two sites in the Vale of Glamorgan as suitable. The two sites being Cwm Mawr and Cwm Bach;

- Natural Resources Wales had grown plug plants at the Botanical Gardens and 75 individual plants were cultivated with 10 to remain with the Botanical Gardens;
- Once ready, the plug plants were planted at specific and appropriate locations at Cwm Mawr and Cwm Bach and their locations recorded via GPS.

In terms of monitoring growth, Mr. Paddock advised that monitoring would begin in August as well as during the Autumn. There would then be annual visits during the Spring or Summer.

The Chair thanked with Mr. Paddock for the update.

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

Mr. R. Sheppard advised that the Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast meetings had recommenced with good attendance. In addition, the transfer of the Sea Watch centre had been completed with the issues of access resolved.

(h) Date of Next Meeting –
To be arranged.