

## GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2016.

Present: Councillor Mrs. A.J. Preston (Chairman); Councillor R.P. Thomas (Vice-Chairman), Councillors L. Burnett, Mrs. V.M. Hartrey and C.J. Williams (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Ms. G. Barter (Natural Resources Wales), Mr. J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates), Councillor G. Davies (Bridgend County Borough Council), Mr. R. McLaggan (Merthyr Mawr Estates), Mr. B. Acott (Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast), Ms. P. George (Vale Tourist Association) and Mrs. H. March (Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast).

(a) Announcement

The Chairman welcomed Mrs P. George the representative from the Vale Tourist Association (VTA) to her first meeting. The Group had requested that a representative from the Association be invited to sit on the Group which had subsequently been approved by the Vale of Glamorgan Council at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2015.

(b) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillors R.F. Curtis, J. Drysdale (Vale of Glamorgan Council) and Mr. R. Pratt (Cooke and Arkwright).

(c) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

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

Mr. Lock commenced by advising the Group of the benefits derived from the number of volunteers that assisted with work on the coast. A volunteer event had also been held within the last two weeks to encourage volunteers to help with work within the gardens. Work was also ongoing with the Public Rights of Way section in the Vale of Glamorgan Council in relation to footpaths and bridleways and other work undertaken throughout the year was referred to as below:

- Practical management and maintenance of the Coast had taken place over the winter months with all staff looking to see the benefits over the forthcoming months. In particular, Mr. Lock mentioned that the path had been completed alongside the access road to Dunraven Bay which had been funded out of coastal access monies and which would assist greatly with the

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school season. A number of comments had been received in relation to the reason for the work that had been undertaken with the engineer having advised that it was the best way forward.

- Although there had been a number of storms throughout the winter months only one main incident, where the sea had caused pebbles to be thrown all over the car park, had been an issue. In the main it had been water from land that had caused some issues with a number of footpaths and coastal paths being a challenge.
- On a further positive note the significant numbers of visitors to the area was welcomed with a number being witnessed using the slipway which had been refurbished by Creative Rural Communities (CRC) using Coastal Communities Lottery grant.
- Improvements had also taken place to the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre with a new fire having been fitted in the centre, the floors sanded and new PVC windows installed. A condenser unit had been purchased and placed in the attic to recycle the air and ease condensation. The Centre itself had also been painted on the outside. The next stage of the process was to erect signage at the entrance to the Centre in order that visitors could see more clearly from the road the Centre and thereby encouraged to visit the building.
- For the future it was the intention to consider how other walks could be integrated into the coast and linked to local communities. One of Mr. Lock's main aims was to encourage walkers to frequent local pubs and shops and to bring the coast and the local communities together.
- It was inevitable that some stiles needed replacing, with the intention that they be swapped for kissing gates in order to improve the circular links to local communities.

Mr. Lock finalised his presentation by stating that there was currently a really good feeling of working together in and around the coast and particularly referred to a local café owner in Ogmore who had recently opened the facility and who had introduced herself with the aim of working together.

Members concurred that the circular routes were an important feature in order to link successfully the coast with local communities. Councillor L. Burnett, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, also stated that she was pleased to hear the comments being mentioned regarding circular routes and she welcomed the positive approach by the Glamorgan Heritage Coast team in the interests of adding value. In referring to the local café, she advised that it had been supported by another scheme "Inspiring the Vale" where a bursary had been granted to assist with the setting up of the business. This demonstrated how all the various policies and grant funding opportunities were linking with the theme of working together. Reference was made to the power of social media in promoting the café, which had been extremely successful. Of note was also the fact that over 30 young people had been supported to set up their own businesses within the Vale over the last 12 months.

In referring to the work of CRC, the Operational Manager for Regeneration confirmed that community spirit mentioned reflected a great deal of work on "Sense of Place" carried out by CRC, working with local businesses. Following a plea for more signage on the M4 in order to advertise the coast, the representative from the VTA

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stated that the Association was currently enquiring as to the policy for such signage, advising that the Vale of Glamorgan coastline had so much to offer and that further promotion should be encouraged. In particular the representative referred to the need to signpost visitors to the various historical and interesting sites along the coast, the towns and villages.

The Chairman, in conclusion, thanked Mr. Lock for the informative and comprehensive presentation, advising that she had been pleased to see the resurfacing of the coastal path and although the Centre staff appeared to have had a very busy time over the previous few months, it was obvious that the work was reaping its rewards.

AGREED – T H A T the progress to date and the work being undertaken on the coast be noted.

(e) Welcome Gateway Features –

Ms. Nicola Sumner-Smith, Senior Rural Regeneration Officer, CRC, provided a brief overview of the Welcome Gateway features that were being made for the Glamorgan Heritage Coast.

The leaflet attached to the agenda advised that the artist and sculptor, Howard Bowcott, had been appointed to create four Gateway Welcome features along the Heritage Coast. The commission had been part of the collection of works funded by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Coastal Communities Fund and was being led by CRC and the Regeneration and Economic Development Initiative in the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The exact locations for the features were yet to be finalised but they were likely to be at roadsides at Ogmore, St. Brides Major, Llantwit Major and St. Athan. In undertaking the work, local residents and school children had been attending public consultations where citizens had met Mr. Bowcott, viewed and discussed the initial designs and had offered their thoughts on what makes the Glamorgan Heritage Coast so special, which had also in turn shaped the final designs. The new features would mark the key road sign entrance points to the Glamorgan Heritage Coast area and had been commissioned as part of an ongoing initiative to raise the profile of the destinations to visitors and residents alike.

Ms. Sumner-Smith also provided at the meeting photographs of examples of the sculptures for the Group's information.

AGREED – T H A T Ms. Sumner-Smith be thanked for bringing the details of the Welcome Gateway Features to the Group's attention.

(f) Coastal Access Improvements Works 2015/16 and Planned Work Programmes 2016/17 –

Mr. Bob Guy, Operational Manager for Regeneration, provided the Group with an update on a number of matters relating to the Heritage Coast which were included in

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a tabled document for the Group's information.

In referring to the Coast Access Programme, Mr. Guy advised that the majority of the funding for 2015/16 had been targeted at the Heritage Coast. Other work undertaken related to the recently republished Definitive Map, with members requesting that a copy be made available at the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre for visitors to view.

Following a query regarding how updates to the footpath network are fed into the Definitive Map, Mr. Guy advised that when an Order is confirmed, the OS is updated with the information but the Definitive Map remains as is published in its statutory form until a further review date in the future. Following a further query as to its availability, Mr. Guy stated that the Definitive Map was currently being distributed. Although there were only a small number of copies available, a copy would be forwarded to all Town and Community Councils in the Vale for their information. Mr. Acott confirmed that St. Athan Community Council had recently received theirs.

AGREED – T H A T the update report be noted.

(g) Matters Raised by Bridgend County Borough Council –

Councillor G. Davies, representing Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), stated that the Porthcawl Town Council had recently decided to provide funds for a comfort scheme at Newton Beach. This had not previously been able to be completed due to a number of land issues, however, following further consideration, discussions with two local pubs in the area were proving fruitful.

Work had also commenced on a cycle route from Restbay to Newton in Porthcawl with the first section planned for over the next six to seven months. Although there had been land issues with the fairground owners, following further deliberations an alternative site had been found.

In referring to BCBC's announcement that they would no longer be providing lifeguard cover on the beaches in Bridgend, the local RNLI had confirmed that they would provide a service, which was proving successful. The National Coastwatch had also taken over the Tower on the Harbour in Porthcawl.

Councillor Davies raised the issue of sinking sand in the estuary and wondered whether this was a common issue. Mr. Lock stated that he was not aware of this issue although it was important to note that the area was a dynamic environment and could change on a daily basis. Following consideration of the report it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T Councillor Davies be thanked for providing the above information to the Group with the request that BCBC officers be asked to contact Mr. Lock to discuss any issues.

(h) Matters Raised by Natural Resources Wales –

The Natural Resources Wales representative, Ms. Barter, took the opportunity to congratulate the Glamorgan Heritage Coast team on the work undertaken to date on the coast. In referring to the issue of drone surveys as discussed at the last meeting of the Group, Ms. Barter advised that she had been unable to find out any information on the matter but reassured the Group that if anything was discovered she would contact the Group accordingly.

The telephone number of the Natural Resources Wales main office had recently changed and following confirmation of the new number she would advise the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer accordingly.

In referring to the Natural Resources Wales Partnership Grant that had previously been received by Councils, members were informed that this had now been subsumed into a single Welsh Government Environment Grant to the Vale covering waste, recycling, tidy towns, etc.. The Operational Manager confirmed that following internal discussions within the Vale of Glamorgan regarding how the money should be split, biodiversity projects would receive an increased level of funding in the coming year.

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

Mr. Acott stated that the Friends of the Heritage Coast were still struggling to find a home for the Sea Watch Centre, with the main issue being in relation to access. He reiterated the Friends' commitment and their availability to assist with projects that the Site Ranger required at the Heritage Coast and that the Friends were trying to spread the word of their work throughout communities. Mr. Acott, however, took the opportunity to advise that some Local Town and Community Councils attended their meetings but also urged that any other Town and Community Councils who wished to attend would be most welcome if they so wished. He concluded by advising that one of the key priorities of the Friends was to continue to encourage schools to become involved.

(j) Date of Next Meeting –

The Chairman advised that the next meeting of the Group would take place in September 2016, the date and time of which was to be confirmed.