

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 16th September, 2016.

Present: Councillor Mrs. A.J. Preston (Chairman); Councillor R.P. Thomas (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Mrs. V.M. Hartrey and C.J. Williams (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Mr. J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates), Mr. B. Acott and Mrs. H. March (Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast), Mrs. M. Miyata-Lee (Natural Resources Wales) and Ms. P. George (Vale Tourist Association).

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillors L. Burnett and J. Drysdale, (Vale of Glamorgan Council).

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 15th April, 2016 be agreed as a correct record.

(c) Presentation by the Site Ranger, Mrs. Helen Mills – Achievements and Issues Since the Last Meeting –

Mrs. Mills introduced herself and explained that she was standing in for Mr. P. Lock, who was unable to attend. She advised that she had a ten year association with the Glamorgan Heritage Coast. Mrs. Mills then outlined the following points:

- In terms of visitors, the past 6 months had been very busy, with some days being at full capacity. This could be attributed to the favourable tides that had made the beaches very accessible.
- A few people had been rescued as a result of visitors having spread out but thankfully the Heritage Coast had not experienced some of the issues seen in other coastal areas of the UK.
- The Heritage Coast's work programme had been progressing well with all targets having been met. Progress made also meant that the Rangers had been able to think more long term and had been able to carry out more wildlife conservation work.
- Future work would include more butterfly conservation work as a result of grant funding alongside work to improve access to the car park at Dunraven Bay.
- With regard to Rights of Way, Mrs. Mills advised that a lot of work had been carried out again this year and it had been good for the Rangers to go out around the coast and to look at ways to improve and enhance access for visitors.
- In terms of educational activities, this was regarded as a positive way of encouraging people to experience and enjoy the coastal path, the Group was

advised that there had been slightly fewer visits made by schools. Some schools had also decided to pay for two half day sessions as opposed to paying for one full day.

- Craft and pop up events had begun, which had been successful.

In outlining the important contribution made by volunteers, Mrs. Mills advised that staff from Lloyds Bank had been encouraged to give up one day in order to assist with the maintenance of the area at Dunraven Bay. It was also important to recognise that the staff from Lloyds Bank also provided some very welcoming funds which had helped to pay for new seating areas.

Mr. Acott from Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, queried the fee that would be charged to schools. In reply, Mrs. Mills advised that this was about £2.50 per head. The Group also heard that the reduction in interest from schools may have been as a result of a change in the curriculum.

The Group discussed the need to maintain wooden stiles, as it was felt that these would usually last three or four years and which would require a great deal of maintenance. In reply, Mrs. Mills advised that most had now been replaced with kissing gates which were made of galvanised metal.

The Chairman, in concluding, thanked Mrs. Mills for the information presentation.

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

(d) Update on the Coastal Communities Project, Ms. Nicola Sumner-Smith –

Ms. Sumner-Smith, Senior Rural Regeneration Officer, provided a brief overview of the main activities being undertaken over the past few months.

Ms. Sumner-Smith advised the Group that the artist and sculptor, Howard Bowcott, had been appointed to create four Welcome Gateway Features along the Heritage Coast for Llantwit Major, St. Brides, Ogmore and Gileston / St. Athan. These sculptures would be made from limestone and all would feature bands of writing with the exception of the St. Brides sculpture which featured a poem, written by a local poet with the assistance from the School Council at St. Brides School. The Welcome Gateway Features were likely to be installed this Autumn and the sculpture artist had been commissioned to create a fifth sculpture in the form of a bench which would be placed to the right of the entrance of the historic walled gardens at Dunraven Bay.

The Group was also advised that three beach wheelchairs have been purchased with the Coastal Community Fund and some disability access consultants were commissioned to assess the beaches along the Heritage Coast for suitability of the chairs. Using their recommendations, it was agreed that the chairs would be placed along the coast appropriately. All chairs could be used as both a beach wheelchair and also as a regular wheelchair.

Ms. Sumner-Smith also advised that five storage units had been built at the Heritage Coast Centre, and would now be marketed and let out to beach activity providers or to coastal activity businesses. So far there had already been some expression of interest raised from coastal businesses.

Following the completion of a feasibility study carried out in February that looked into commercial opportunities for the Glamorgan Heritage Coast, pop up events were regarded as a key pilot suggestion from this study. The Group was advised that after asking for expressions of interest from event organisers, a panel had chosen four event pop up ideas to be trialled at Dunraven Bay during September / October 2016 that would include an open air cinema, a craft festival and food and drink events. Ms. Sumner-Smith advised that a recent craft event had been attended by about 600 people and feedback had been gathered which was generally very positive, although some people did comment that they would've liked to have had light refreshments available.

In querying the affordability of the fifth Welcome Gateway Feature, Ms. Sumner-Smith advised that the original brief included 4 gateways and a sculpture trail. After considering the trails proposals it was decided that the funds available were not sufficient to achieve the original aims. It was therefore decided not to progress the sculpture trail and concentrate on gateways and to pool the money into one pot.

With regard to the funding for the pop up events, Ms. Sumner-Smith stated that some were self-financing whilst some had received support from the Glamorgan Heritage Coast. A review would be undertaken around the affordability and how viable each event was. The Group was advised that the Heritage Coast would usually help with aspects such as the electrics and lighting and also with promotion. A toolkit would be produced for event organisers in order to assist them with the hosting of events. Ms. Sumner-Smith added, that this was the first year for such events and so for future years there maybe chance to scale some elements back.

(e) Verbal Update on Works to the Welsh Coastal Path – Mr. Gwyn Teague, Public Rights of Way Officer –

Mr. Teague provided the Group with an update on a number of matters relating to the Heritage Coast and the major projects planned for the year ahead.

Mr. Teague began by advising that main funding was from the Welsh Government, with £900,000 allocated to Natural Resources Wales and in total amounted to £4.5million over 5 years. The project works would be delivered by the Local Authority which covered two main areas, these being the development of new coastal path and also the maintenance of existing pathways.

In outlining improvement works in the Vale of Glamorgan, Mr. Teague advised that there were three infrastructure projects ongoing, these being

1. Dimhole in Llantwit Major

2. Cwm Colhuw
3. Sully Playing Fields.

With regard to works at Dimhole in Llantwit Major, this related to path improvements as it had been identified that the walkway was very slippery and was very close to the cliff side edge. This therefore presented a major health and safety risk, particularly in relation to contractors accessing the site.

In terms of the work to Cwm Colhuw, the Group was advised that this had originally begun last year but had been delayed due to bad weather. The plan was to level the path and provide a surface of compacted stone.

For the Sully Playing Field, the work related to the creation of a surfaced path on a route that was very well used and was likely to be contained by fencing from an adjoining landowner in the coming months.

The Group was also apprised of projects in which legal action was being undertaken. These related to paths at Ogmore Down, Monkash and Gileston. With regard to Ogmore Down, the Group noted that this related to a change in the direction of the path and that consultation had been undertaken with Legal Services. For Monkash, action had been taken in order to recategorise a length of pathway as a public footpath. Similarly, for Gileston there was a need to move the path closer to the coastal area and so an Order had been made to create a new route around the old coastal defences.

Mr Teague, also advised the Group of maintenance projects that would be undertaken. These related to a day to day programme that included activities such as clearing vegetation and improving safety features. With regard to clearance, Mr Teague advised that the annual contract covered 19 kilometres of the coastal path with a separate contract for clearing inland sections. In total, there were two clearances carried out each year which in total amounted to 33 kilometres. The first around April or May with the second during September.

Mrs March stated that parts of the path were very overgrown and so could do with an earlier cut. She also stated that with regard to Dim Hole, there was a very dangerous part towards the back of the bay, and she asked if something could be done.

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

(f) Matters Raised by Bridgend County Borough Council –

None.

(g) Matters Raised by Natural Resources Wales-

None.

(h) Matters raised by the Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast –

Mr. Acott stated that a long term question was the potential impact as a result of the decommissioning of the Aberthaw Power Station. Concern was raised in relation to the area of scientific interest and the need to maintain this for tourist purposes. Mr. Bob Guy stated that this could be given thought, but it may be that responsibility for this area would lie with the Wildlife Trust.

Mrs. March raised a query regarding consideration of the Seawatch Centre and commented that access issues made disposal difficult. Ms. Sumner-Smith stated that the promotion of this was something that staff from Creative Rural Communities could assist with.

(i) Date of Next Meeting –

To be confirmed.