

## GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2019.

Present: Councillor Mrs. S. Hanks (Chairman); Councillors L. Burnett and N.C. Thomas (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Mr. B. Acott (Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast), Mr. M.O. Sanchez (Natural Resources Wales), Mrs. H. March and Councillor R. Gant (One Voice Wales) and Mr. K. Rogers (Glamorgan Wildlife Trust).

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

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillors A.C. Parker, V.P. Driscoll, Mrs. R. Nugent-Finn and S.T. William (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Mr. J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates) and Councillor Ms. N. Clarke (Bridgend County Borough Council).

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

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

In commenting on the work, achievements and issues over the past six months, Mr. Locke outlined the following:

- The Easter weekend had been very busy and to illustrate this a photograph was provided which showed over 400 cars in the car park which would indicate over 600 people visiting the surrounding area;
- A key challenge for the future was getting more people and visitors to spend their money at the beach and the surrounding facilities;
- 400 – 600 families was a massive footfall and could generate a large income;
- It was important to ensure that the gardens were well maintained and made safe for families so a lot of work had been undertaken by volunteers;
- New bins had been bought which required less manual work;
- Volunteers had been out and about cutting back vegetation and during the summer, due to the weather which included periods of rain and periods of good sunshine, had meant the grass and vegetation had grown at an increasing rate;
- A lot of biodiversity work had been carried out and this helped plan to flourish and flower. There was however a challenge as some grant money had ceased and so the Council was happy to work in partnership with other organisations to identify funding;

- New kissing gates had been put in place, particularly around Bridle Wales in order to make them more horse friendly;
- There had been a slowdown in the amount of community work carried out although rangers had been out in Wick to help with a visit by children to explore nature and wild life;
- A lot of work had been undertaken to maintain paths by cutting back vegetation;
- At Llantwit Major Beach new plastic benches had been installed. These looked like wood but were more stable and would last longer;
- Rangers had been undertaking Rights of Way work near to the boundary with Rhondda Cynon Taff;
- The team had also been undertaking conservation work which had been paid for by Natural Resources Wales because Welsh Government grant had ceased;
- A new information board and map had been installed at Llantwit Major Beach car park which had been funded by Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast;
- Over the summer there had been four separate grass cuts and over 42 miles of Rights of Way paths cleared.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Locke for the update and subsequently it was

AGREED – T H A T the update by Mr. Locke be noted.

(d) Countryside Team Restructure and Discussions with Dunraven Estates –

Mr. Phil Chappell, Operational Manager, Regeneration, provided an update on plans for a Countryside restructure and discussions held with Dunraven Estates regarding the ongoing relationship between the Estate and the Council and the future of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre in Southerndown.

Mr. Chappell stated that the aim was to drive more visitors to the centre and so the Council had been looking at ways of improving the facilities. A new entrance to the gardens for small vehicles is planned by the Dunraven Estate in order to improve access for events. However, it was recognised that the footfall to the Centre needed to be increased and so discussions had been held with Dunraven Estates regarding the use of the building. What was being discussed was the use of the building as a café/tea room and further discussions would be held in February 2020.

In terms of the restructure for the Countryside Team, Mr. Chappell stated that proposed restructure recommends a reduction in the number of receptionists and rangers. Nia Hollins, the Principle Tourism and Marketing Officer and Nicola Sumner Smith, the Principal Rural Regeneration officer are working together to identify a variety of opportunities at Dunraven and Cwm Colhugh.

A Councillor queried demand during the off season. In reply, Mr Chappell stated that this was always a concern, but it was important to recognise that other local cafés were busy all year round. The Dunraven Family would need to be in agreement over

the future direction of the centre and any development would be sensitive and focus on quality provision and telling the story of the heritage coast as part of the offer.

Mrs. Heather March queried who would run the possible new café. In reply, Mr. Chappell stated that the Council would work with the estate to identify a suitable partner to operate any commercial undertaking.

Mr. Acott stated that the Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast had over the years provided a lot of financial assistance such as the availability of scooters. Mr. Acott queried whether postcards provided by the Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast would still be available for sale. In reply, Mr. Chappell stated he imagined that any new operator would welcome the opportunity to sell products linked to the area. He also confirmed that discussions would also be held with Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast.

(e) Verbal Update on the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan – Mr. Gwyn Teague, Public Rights of Way Officer –

Mr. Teague provided an update on the progress in redrafting the Vale of Glamorgan Rights of Way Improvement Plan. He stated that the Local Access Forum had been involved in devising a new draft and as a result a number of changes had been made and a number of new actions included. The Improvement Plan still contained the main overarching themes which were as follows:

- Management
- Stakeholders
- Information.

The next steps were to present the amended aims of the Plan to the Local Access Forum and for a draft to be approved by Cabinet.

A Councillor queried whether there had been impact due to the adverse weather. In reply, Mr. Teague stated that during the summer there had been more clearing work than previous years but there had not been a huge amount of problems due to the weather.

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

For the Group's information, a document was tabled which outlined development and actions within the county of Bridgend. The Chairman stated that if members of the Group had any queries then they could be fed back through to Democratic Services in the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

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

The Group was advised that a staff restructure was nearly complete which would mean there being two Conservation Officers for the Vale of Glamorgan.

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

Mr. Acott of Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast stated that the Sea Watch Centre was still no further ahead as there were many legal aspects to be considered. Mr. Acott also referred to the membership of the Group and he queried whether a Member of St. Athan Community Council could be added. This would be investigated by Democratic Services.

Mr. Acott then referred to the decommissioning of Aberthaw Power Station which had 3 weeks of generating power left. It would be then be made safe by March 2020, followed then by a 6-month decommissioning period. The site would then be handing over to a developer. Mr. Acott asked for the Advisory Group to be regularly informed of developments.

(i) Date of Next Meeting –

To be arranged.