

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 17th September, 2021.

Present: Councillor S.M. Hanks (Chair); Councillor A.C. Parker (Vice-Chair); Councillors L. Burnett, V.P. Driscoll and S.T. Wiliam (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Mr. B. Acott (Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast), Mrs. G. Barter (Natural Resources Wales), Mr. T. Davies (Dunraven Estates), Mr. J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates), Mrs. E. Felton (Natural Resources Wales), Mr. D. Ludlow (Welsh Wildlife Trust), and Councillor A. Trousdell (One Voice Wales).

Also present: Mr. P. Chappell, Mr. C. Cheesman, Ms. S. Cresswell, Mr. P. Locke, Mr. S. Pickering and Mr. G. Teague (Vale of Glamorgan Council), Mrs. A. Brown (Bridgend County Borough Council)

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillor R. Nugent-Finn and Mr. R. Mclaggan (Merthyr Mawr Estate)

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 27th November, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Achievements and Site Update (Verbal) –

In commenting on the work, achievements and issues since the last meeting held in November 2020 Mr. Locke outlined the following:

- A significant amount of conservation work and Public Rights of Way (PROW) maintenance had taken place since last Autumn. For example, this included work with Natural Resources Wales at meadow in Penllyn.
- The Team had begun to use new and different types of machines which had made their work easier. For example, a tractor was now used for grass cutting.
- A number of stone stiles had been removed because the concrete blocks that they were built on were over 30 years old. These had been replaced with kissing gates which were lower in height so they also improved accessibility.
- The wet winter period had made the work of the Team more difficult, but generally PROW and conservation work was going well.
- The dry summer months had made the ground hard, so this also presented difficulties to the Team.
- Some of the completed work included, the construction of a flight steps in Llantwit Major, a memorial bench on Foot Path 7, new bridge north of Cowbridge and emergency repairs to a gate in Dinas Powys.

- During the summer and because of Covid-19 restrictions on travelling abroad, the beaches had been very busy.
- The Team had reported a number of incidents of anti-social behaviour from members of the public around access.
- The busy summer period had flagged up the need for more Lifeguard presence at the beaches.
- Funding had been received from Welsh Government for the 'Summer of Fun' activities. This included a range of events for children such as rock pooling, all of which had proved very successful with lots of participants.
- The work of the Local Nature Partnership had been a success too.

Councillor L. Burnett praised Mr. Locke and his Team for the wonderful impact of the 'Summer of Fun' activities. She stated that it was important for all the positive feedback to be collated and forwarded to Welsh Government. These events were extremely important when it came to the wellbeing and mental health of children, and so the feedback would hopefully encourage Welsh Government to provide funding for Councils to host more fantastic events like this.

Mr. D. Ludlow of the Welsh Wildlife Trust, queried plans for the resurfacing of the path at Cwm Colhuw. In reply, Mr. Locke stated this was still at the planning stage. Mrs. Cresswell advised that CADW had been involved in the planning stage and so discussions were ongoing regarding funding and the certain requirements that CADW had stipulated.

With regard to extra Lifeguard cover at the beaches, the Chair commented that this would be raised with the Director of Environment and Housing.

(d) Verbal update on works undertaken to the Wales Coastal Path – Mr. G. Teague (Public Rights of Way Officer)

Mr. G. Teague provided an update of works started or completed since the previous meeting.

The Dunes 2 Dunes project had been completed which included the dunes at Kenfig and Merthyr Mawr which were designated as National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Special Area of Conservation.

The aim of the project was to form a collaboration of NNR managers, landowners, golf clubs and farmers to sustainably manage the coastal landscape, improve ecosystems, increase biodiversity and connectivity between the two dune systems.

The project had received funding of £312,54 over a 3 year period. The project had commenced in August 2018 and was completed in July of this year. Over that period the project had undertaken work around:

- Habitat management – scrub clearance, scrapes and felling.

- Boundary and path work – drystone walls, fencing, hedge planting, signage and path improvements.
- Surveying – boundary condition, bats, bumblebees etc.
- Visitor Management – behavioural change to increase visitors while lowering impact.
- Training – volunteers and collaboration members.
- Work Placement – Swansea University Biology students.
- Golf Environment Organisation (GEO) – sustainability credential.

In terms of access projects for 2021-22, Mr. Teague referred progress as outlined below:

- The annual cut had been completed and new kissing gates installed to replace various stone stiles between Southerndown and Nash Point.
- Improvement works at Monknash had been scaled back to focus more on surface erosion.
- Roll back of the fencing to increase width of the path had been completed at Nash Point (East). There was also an ongoing project to improve drainage to the east of the lighthouse, work of which was due to start shortly.
- There had been 3 legal orders to divert the path at; St. Donats, Tresilian Wood and Summerhouse.
- Contractors were due on site at Gileston to commence drainage work.
- Funding via the Access Improvement Grant had been used to improve the path at Llantwit Major Comprehensive School and at Llantwit Major Cemetery.
- The Council had a new legal duty relating to crop enforcement, this meant that the Council had to catalogue previous complaints, write to landowners to notify of the inspection date, follow up with a notice if landowner not compliant; and if necessary take direct action to reinstate path.

Mr. C. Cheesman was requested to provide an update on the Local Nature Partnership. This was a Welsh Government initiative that would build a nature recovery network to help reverse the decline in natural environment, engaging people and communities, businesses and decision-makers in both practical action and strategic planning for a healthy, resilient, and nature-rich Wales. These partnerships would ensure that every input could have the maximum impact on increasing biodiversity in Wales.

Mr. Cheesman advised that we were now 6 months in and so far, 84 organisations had signed up from a wide range not just those with an interest in wildlife. A grant had been received from Welsh Government which had enabled the purchase of a range of equipment and machinery to better manage green spaces for ecological recovery. It was hoped that more equipment could be provided to groups and organisations.

In addition, work had started on the production of a Nature Recovery Action Plan, which was more proactive than the previous Biodiversity Action Plan. The new Plan would include a programme of work over a 5-year period and would be more inclusive.

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

Mrs. A. Brown (Destination Management Officer) provided update of some developments taking place in Bridgend, and she referred to the following:

- There had been a gradual return of events being held at Merthry Mawr, such as the Forest Festival in June and July. There had been a few issues, but overall, this was a success and events had helped raise the profile of the area.
- Some events had not been able to take place because of the potential for large crowds and Covid.
- A bid had been successful for Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (Welsh Government) funding to improve access to the countryside. This related to 5 rural locations in the Bridgend area.
- Bridgend were working on a new countryside access plan and the Heritage Coast was an important element to this.

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

Mrs. L. Felton thanked Mr. Locke and his Team for all their conservation work. She also thanked Mr. Cheeseman for the work related to the Local Nature Partnership.

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

Mr. B. Acott advised that Covid had been a very difficult time for the Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast and unfortunately the Group had been unable to meet. In addition the Secretary had also made the decision to stand down, so a new Secretary would need to be appointed.

With regard to the Sea Watch Centre, the transfer of this to an organisation in Bristol was still ongoing, but it was hoped that this would be completed within 6 weeks.

(h) Date of Next Meeting –

To be arranged.