

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 30th September 2022.

Present: Councillor C. Stallard (Chair); Councillor E.J. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair); Councillors A.M. Ernest, R. Fisher and C.P. Franks (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Mr. B. Acott (Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast), Mr. T. Davies (Dunraven Estates), Mrs. L. Hancock (Natural Resources Wales) and Councillor A. Trousdell (One Voice Wales)

Also present: Mr. D. Hunt, Mr. P. Locke and Mr. S. Pickering (Officers - Vale of Glamorgan Council)

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillor S. Hanks (Vale of Glamorgan Councillor), Mr. R. McLaggan (Merthyr Mawr Estate), Mr. J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates) and Mr. P. Chappell (Officer – Vale of Glamorgan Council)

(b) Introductions

As there were new members following the local government elections in May, there were brief introductions from all present.

(c) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

(d) Presentation by Site Ranger, Mr. Paul Locke – History of the Heritage Coast –

Mr. Locke provided a brief overview of the creation of the Heritage Coast, referring to the following:

- The designations of Heritage Coast (HC) came out during the 1970s. There were about 30 across England and Wales.
- There were only 3 in Wales including Glamorgan, Ceredigion and the Great Orme.
- HCs were created to protect areas of undeveloped coastline.
- The geography of the Glamorgan HC included the caravan site in Porthcawl to the former power station in Aberthaw, with the stretch of coast in between undeveloped in order to protect wildlife.
- A large stretch of the HC was made up of limestone rock. This produced a very dramatic and dynamic coastline. It was prone to regular rock falls, estimated to be one every 5 seconds.

- The Glamorgan Heritage Coast was now part of the Wales Coastal Path, which was heavily promoted to encourage visitors.
- The work of the Rangers was mainly focused on conservation (including maintain grasslands to encourage meadow growth), path maintenance and coastal erosion.
- The Team would also work with landowners which was sometimes difficult as large parts of the HC were owned privately and used as agricultural land. For example, organic farming techniques was better for wildlife.
- The Team also worked in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales on conservation and across the wider area such as the common land around Ogmere-by-Sea/St. Brides.
- There would be regular educational school visits to the HC, sometimes from schools as far away as Birmingham. The appeal of these visits had grown following lockdown and the Covid pandemic.
- The Team was heavily involved in litter picking, and unfortunately there had been a recent and significant rise of instances of anti-social behaviour.
- Other negative issues including more litter and mess left by campers and the RNLI undertaking more rescues especially with people being cut off because of the high tides.
- Plastics and litter were now a big problem, as materials deposited in river up stream would be washed down to the sea.
- Sewage outfall was also another problem, particularly because of high rain fall.

Councillor C. Franks queried if there was a role for the Group to encourage more organic farming. In reply, Mr. S. Pickering (Team Leader – Countryside Services) agreed that farmers needed to be encouraged to adopt more organic farming techniques. Overgrazing of farmland was a recognised issue which had an adverse effect on wildlife, so there would be more dialogue with farmers and Natural Resources Wales. Mr. Pickering confirmed that there was grant money available from Welsh Government relating to biodiversity.

In reply to a query from the Chair, Councillor C. Stallard, Mr. Locke confirmed that that in terms of visitors, the HC was at capacity, with the car parks full during the summer months. During Spring and Autumn, there would be different types of visitors and people staying more over-night. Summer months were more popular with day visitors to the beach.

Councillor A. Ernest commented that the 10th anniversary of the creation of the Wales Coastal Path was approaching so there would be a need to celebrate that. In reply, Mrs L. Hancock (Natural Resources Wales - NRW) stated that as Coastal Path Officers sat with NRW, they would be able to assist with that. She also stated that NRW could also assist with litter, particularly speaking to local shops and the type of green products that they stocked. Further to the issue of litter, Mr. Locke confirmed that various volunteer groups would assist, but litter picking was mainly down to staff time, although the Team would be able to plan if there was a heavy storm forecast.

The Chair asked if better signage would help with litter and rubbish. In reply, Mr. Pickering stated that usually signs were ignored, so enforcement and issuing fines was a better solution.

Councillor E. Goodjohn queried if there could be more information about places to camp. In reply, the Group was advised that prior to Covid, the Council did produce a brochure, with a lot of the same information now in the Council's website. It was noted that the Council's Principal Tourism & Marketing Officer would be able to provide a presentation on the promotional work and activities carried out. This would also include an overview of the economic benefits to the local communities and how visitors and businesses were encouraged to buy local produce.

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

AGREED – T H A T the Principal Tourism & Marketing Officer be asked to provide a presentation on the promotional work and activities carried around the Heritage Coast, and to also include information of the economic benefits to local communities.

(e) Update on Public Rights of Way Work – Mr. David Hunt, Public Rights of Way Officer –

The Public Rights of Way Officer provided a brief update on Public Rights of Way work. This included the following points:

- The Vale of Glamorgan's Local Access Forum (LAF) had been re-appointed, with a meeting of the Forum scheduled for the end of November.
- A new Rights of Way Improvement Plan had been drafted, and this would be considered by the LAF.
- In relation to the Coastal Access Improvement Programme, a grant for improvement works has been approved.
- Various areas of coastal rollback were planned which would lead to positive outcomes and furniture improvements, for example at St. Donats and Monknash.
- Improvement works had been completed at several locations including sections of the path a Gileston and Nashpoint.
- Stiles and furniture had been improved or upgraded at various locations of the path.

Councillor C. Franks commented that there needed to be more funding from Welsh Government to help with the maintenance of the path. In reply, Mr S. Pickering stated that last year Welsh Government had provided a maintenance grant of £19.5k. This included a small increase. The Council had also made several bids to Welsh Government for additional funding, some which had been successful some that had not. It was planned for further bids to be submitted this year.

The Group agreed that it was important for the issues of greater funding for maintenance to be raised for Welsh Government, so it considered it appropriate to ask the Leader of the Vale Council to make representations on behalf of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast. It was also agreed that the Chair would also submit a letter to the Welsh Government Minister.

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the Leader of the Vale Council, be asked to make representations to Welsh Government seeking additional funding to assist with the maintenance and upkeep of the Coast Path in the Vale of Glamorgan area.
 - (2) T H A T the Chair of the Group writes a letter to the Welsh Government requesting additional funding to be allocated to assist with the maintenance and upkeep of the Coast Path in the Vale of Glamorgan area.
- (f) Update on the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre – Mr. Phil Chappell, Operational Manager – Regeneration.

As the Officer was unable to be present at the meeting, it was agreed for this matter to be deferred to the next meeting.

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

None.

- (h) Matters to be Raised by Natural Resources Wales – Glamorgan Coast as a Nature Reserve.

The Group welcomed Liz Hancocks from Natural Resources Wales (NRW), who wished to introduce the concept of Nature Networks, which was one of the latest tools for nature recovery.

It was outlined, that the South Central Area Statement was launched in April 2020 and had five themes, including Building Resilient Ecosystems. Since the launch, that theme had focused on understanding and expanding the regional evidence base, as well as maintaining relationships with partners and partnerships, to meet the challenges of the nature emergency in place.

Part of the regional evidence base work had been to create seven ecosystem profiles that assessed the natural resources in South Central, and how to move towards their sustainable management. It also assessed ecosystem resilience through the four attributes of diversity, extent, condition and connectivity.

The coastal ecosystem profile (NRW 2022) was most relevant for the Glamorgan coast, and had identified three priorities for action:

1. Broaden and reconnect coastal habitats, building extent and connectivity
2. Restore natural processes to improve condition
3. Identify nature-based solutions for coastal adaptation at suitable location

Liz Hancocks advised that the Glamorgan coast had been identified as a candidate Resilient Ecological Network, or nature network, due to the number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). These sites formed the core zone of a network, but these were not enough for nature to recover. This would also include looking at

litter and pollution, methods of farming and protecting areas to allow more species to move between sites and improve biodiversity. Funding from Welsh Government would be available with the process for bids between £250k to £1m closed but there still opportunities for bids below £250k were still. Further funding opportunities would also be available, but an action plan needed to be in place first. It was important to note that discussions had yet to take place directly with landowners.

The nature recovery and wider landscape zones supported the protected sites and healthy functioning ecosystems. For the Glamorgan Coast, this could be sites such as Aberthaw power station regeneration and features such as the Wales Coast Path. NRW were working on draft maps to show the candidate nature network, and these would be shared as soon as they were available.

It was noted that the next steps were to discuss with partners and partnerships in order to refine the map. In identifying a candidate nature network, NRW would not be providing a vision or an action plan for nature recovery in that network. Creating visions and action plans needed to be collaborative and involve as many stakeholders as possible.

The Chair stated that she was sure that the Group would be happy to support the initiative and attend any meetings.

The Group noted that some farmers would be unwilling to consider alternative or organic farming methods unless there was a subsidy to do so. The Vale Council had embraced the importance of protecting and improving the environment, but it also recognised that better links needed to be established with landowners and farmers.

Liz Hancocks advised that mapping would be the next stage which would lead to more discussing and engagement and stakeholders, and there maybe opportunities for representatives to be involved. A deadline would be established and the maps then shared with the Group, in the meantime members of the Group were free to share the details with third parties.

AGREED – T H A T the Group agrees and support the principle of the Glamorgan Coast as a Nature Network.

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

Mr. Acott of Friends of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast stated that as a result of Covid, the membership of the Friends had been affected, so there was a need to attract new members.

The use of the seawatch centre was in the process of being taken over by a women's group from Bristol.

(j) Date of Next Meeting –

To be arranged.