

GLAMORGAN HERITAGE COAST ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on 4th April, 2025.

Present: Councillor C. Stallard (Chair); Councillor E. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair) and Councillor S.M. Hanks (Vale of Glamorgan Council); Miss. L. Hancocks (Natural Resources Wales), Mr. R. Sheppard (Friends of Glamorgan Heritage Coast).

Also present: Councillor N. Farr (Bridgend County Borough Council), Miss. M. Morgan (Ogmore Commoners), Mr. C. Cheesman, Mr. M. Clogg, Mr. D. Hunt and Mr. P. Lock (Officers – Vale of Glamorgan Council) and R. Frowen (Officer – Bridgend County Borough Council).

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillors A.M. Ernest, R. Fisher, C.P. Franks and J. Lynch-Wilson (Vale of Glamorgan Council), J. Golunski (Dunraven Estates) and T. Davies (Crown Estates).

(b) Minutes –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 11th October, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

(c) Update on Work Undertaken on the Heritage Coast by the Countryside Rangers – Paul Lock, Site Ranger, Glamorgan Heritage Coast –

Mr. Lock, Site Ranger, provided an update .Mr. Lock advised the Group:

- Rights Of Way works supported by the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) would soon end. Over the course of two and a half years the fund had been used to improve communities through better links and Rights of Way.
- SPF money had been used to promote routes and fund the installation of 264 new modern stiles as the older ones were difficult and unsuitable for some people to access.
- In most cases, landowners had been on board with the installation of new stiles although there had been some concerns relating to livestock proofing.
- The SPF grant money had also been used to improve boardwalks around Cowbridge with 150m of new boardwalk installed around Cowbridge Comprehensive School. The boardwalk was made of recycled plastic which would be more sustainable and easier to maintain.
- Despite the end of the Shared Prosperity Fund grant there was still lots of Right of Way Improvement works to be undertaken.
- In terms of coastal path works, the Rangers had rolled back the path east of St. Donats to allow the path to be widened and to limit the encroachment of vegetation.

- On the College side of St. Donats, funding had been provided to improve the path due to water-logged tracks.
- The usual maintenance work had also been undertaken in relation to sections of the path close to cliff edges.
- A bridge had been installed at Cwm Mawr, a big undertaking which required installation of very large and heavy steel girders. The assistance of volunteers with the installation was appreciated.
- There had been lots of conservation and habitat management work for example around Monks' Wood which was part of the Local Nature Partnership management plan.
- Over the previous months there had been lots of school visits, an increased number of compared to this time last year.
- It was important to recognise the work of the Valeways Volunteer Group which helped with the Rights of Way clearance work and their efforts were now better aligned with the priorities of the Rangers.

Councillor C. Stallard (Chair) stated that the partnership with Valeways was very positive. P. Locke stated that there was good communication with Valeways and the Rangers were working well with them on a number of practical projects.

L. Hancocks (Natural Resources Wales) thanked Mr. Lock and the Rangers for the work in improving the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In addition, the Chair also offered thanks to the Rangers for their hard work and commitment.

In terms of future funding prospects, S. Pickering advised that there was no more grant money available through the SPF, although something may be possible through the Levelling Up funding stream in the future.

AGREED – T H A T the Group's thanks and appreciation be passed on to the Rangers for their hard work.

(d) Update on Welsh Government Coastal Access Improvement Grant 2024/25 – David Hunt, Countryside Access Manager –

D. Hunt, Countryside Access Manager, provided an update in relation to projects supported by the Coastal Access Improvement Grant. The summary included the following points:

- A bid had been successful through Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for the rollback of paths 5 and 6 at St. Donats.
- The surface to paths 5 and 6 would also be improved to ensure that the section was safer for users.
- Work was also progressing for the path around Summerhouse Bay and negotiations were ongoing with the landowner.
- Funding from NRW had also been provided for Cwm Mawr and the installation of a new bridge and the erection of a new boardwalk.
- A section of the path at the Atlantic College had also been improved as it had been affected by severe rain and erosion and was therefore a slip hazard.

Councillor S. Stallard (Chair), queried whether the new section at Summerhouse Point – Mill Lane (Boverton) would be open before the summer. In reply, D. Hunt said that work on new fences should start as soon as the funding was received.

(e) Update on Glamorgan Coastal Community Capacity Building Fund – Colin Cheesman, Ecologist –

C. Cheesman (Ecologist) provided an update on the work in relation to the Glamorgan Coast Community Capacity Building Fund.

C. Cheesman advised that the project had begun in 2023 following an initiative by Natural Resources Wales. The project's aim was to consult and engage with the communities and businesses along the Heritage Coast in order to understand the ecological requirements aimed at improving nature. Following that, a Capacity Building Fund was provided through Welsh Government and a number of bids for improvements were submitted.

A key part of the funding related to the employment of a Coastal Project Development Officer whose role it was to engage with communities, to set up a local forum and to look at specific improvement projects.

There had been a number of pilot projects over the past two years, some related to sites of nature conservation and some to look at ways to harness and develop the connections between nature habitats. In addition, work was carried out in relation to a number of SINC's, with 11 coastal cinques identified in the Council's Replacement Local Development Plan.

Another important element of the project was in relation to improving coastal access and so a number of innovative trails had been developed in addition to a new reporting mechanism for walkers to allow them to report any issues that they may have observed.

There has also been work related to mobile phone signals which along the coastal route could be fairly weak, a mapping exercise is underway to ascertain the mobile signal strengths. That would enable identification of where the signals were at their weakest and would allow the Council to work with mobile phone providers to see how the signal services could be improved. That would therefore allow walkers and users of the path to have better access and more online resources through apps on their mobile phones.

Other projects related to:

- Litter and the Keep Wales Tidy scheme;
- Improving signs and way markers;
- Schemes aimed at improving nature participation and coastal literacy, particularly for schools and young people;
- Marine Life Rescue and assistance projects for stranded animals and fish;
- Recording wildlife project with the RNLi;

- A Beach Resource Library to encourage the reuse of beach toys etc.

Funding for the Coastal Project Development Officer would cease with the end of the Shared Prosperity funding and it was hoped that work would be progressed through a number of Coastal Co-ordinators' posts that were being considered by Welsh Government.

It was noted that the installation of permanent barbeque pits could be problematic in terms of maintenance and cleanliness.

(f) Parking on Common Ground off the B4524 – Update from Mike Clogg, Operational Manager – Engineering –

M. Clogg provided a brief update on planned works to improve the parking on common ground off the B4524, Ogmore by Sea.

M. Clogg stated that there were two car parks which were being looked at, those being West Farm and Portobello car parks. For Norton Hill, vehicles were parking in unsuitable areas and so were causing damage to parts of the common. For the Portobello car park there were concerns with parking after hours and overnight leading to issues around litter and anti-social behaviour.

Improvements planned for Norton related to the installation of wooden bollards which would prevent parking, but in order to install those an application had to be made to PEDW. That could likely be a lengthy process between 6 – 12 months.

In relation to Portobello, plans related to the installation of barriers which would limit the height of vehicles that could access the car park. In addition, locked gates would also be installed so that the car park could be locked and not be accessible overnight.

M. Clogg advised the consultation on both car parks would be undertaken with the local communities and nearby landowners. M. Morgan (Ogmore Commoners) stated that there was a need for more signage relating to grazing and keeping dogs under control.

L. Hancocks (Natural Resources Wales) stated that proactive community engagement would be key as well as sending out positive messages as to why the changes were being made.

P. Lock (Ranger) queried whether high barriers could also be installed at the Southerndown car park. M. Clogg stated that he would investigate whether the installation of such barriers was feasible.

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

R. Frowen advised that a new Rights of Way path had been opened south of the Candleston car park.

With regard to Porthcawl, an agreement had been reached with the RNLI in relation to a new lifeguard station and a new play area had been opened.

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

L. Hancocks advised that the Shoredock Project had been progressing, and the relevant officer would check the sites at which the new plants were planted to see if it had been successful. In addition, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) were undertaking a national piece of work to look at opportunities for biodiversity and there would be opportunities in the Vale of Glamorgan. In addition, the Local Nature Partnership had devised a Recovery Action Plan and that would be progressed by NRW in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

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

Nothing of note to be raised.

(j) Any Other Business –

The Chair mentioned the prospect of an art exhibition showcasing a 20th century female artist inspired by the Heritage Coast

(k) Date of Next Meeting –

To be determined.