

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2026

REFERENCE FROM PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2026

“587 PETITION SUBMISSION – DECLARE A LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (LNR) AT BARRY’S OLD HARBOUR (DCR) –

The covering report to the petition, introduced by the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, asked Members of the Committee to consider a public petition submitted relating to a proposed declaration for a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) to be located at Barry’s Old Harbour.

On 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2025 a petition from R. Curtis was submitted, on behalf of Barry Action for Nature, calling on the Council to ‘Declare a local nature reserve at Barry’s Old Harbour to help protect local wildlife’. As Lead Petitioner, R. Curtis was invited to present the petition at the meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> January, and, in line with the Council’s petition scheme, would be afforded 3 minutes speaking time in which to address the Committee.

Key considerations included the rationale for the petition (the protection of the Old Harbour’s saltwater marsh and the local wildlife through declaring a LNR), the level of support for the petition (a total of 607 signatures), and the response from Council officers, such as the Director of Place, the Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services and County Ecologist - Regeneration Section, which, whilst in principle this location had considerable merit in being considered as a LNR, there were challenges and points that needed to be considered as well, such as resourcing and funding. Overall, the conclusion was that the petition proposal on declaring a LNR at this location was not practicable and should not be pursued at this time, but could be reconsidered in the next financial year.

R. Curtis, the Lead Petitioner, raised several points to the Committee to consider, including the birdlife and the existence of the salt marsh there, and giving the wider local wildlife a space to feed and rest. Declaring a LNR would protect the local habitat / species such as the Curlew and support the local environment, such as preventing flooding and stop further development in the area. It would also help to address the issue of jet skiers and dog walkers who may be unintentionally disturbing the wildlife and habitat at the Old Harbour, and address pollution / sewage discharged locally.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services highlighted the local habitat and flooding considerations, noting the ongoing liaison with Natural Resources Wales and Dwr Cymru regarding these issues and maintaining a watching brief at the site in question. He emphasised the need to protect species such as the Curlew without attracting undue disturbance and encouraged reporting

of any harmful activity. He added that the saltwater marsh and wider habitat required further investigation and assessment.

Councillor Dr Johnson asked what declaring a Local Nature Reserve would mean in practice, i.e. what protections it provides, what responsibilities it places on the Council, the resources required, and the key benefits and challenges involved. The Chair also added what the definition for sufficient wildlife value was in terms of designating the local area as an LNR. In response, the County Ecologist explained that the County already had three LNRs. The guidance was clear that the Council should have aims and objectives in declaring an LNR, an idea of how it would manage it, monitor it, engage the public, opportunities for education and what the costs were. Sufficient wildlife value had to be considered in this context, but this did not mean exceptional wildlife value, as seen in other types of nature reserve, but rather considerations would be around the value or benefit to the local community in having this natural area nearby, etc. Also, as part of the review of the Local Development Plan (LDP) and as part of the Coastal Project, local coastal sites were considered for their importance in nature conservation. The Old Harbour qualified under these criteria and had therefore been included in the revised list of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). If this was completed, it would offer some protection, but only within a planning context.

K. Mitchell, a Tenant Representative asked about the potential funding and grants available to set up a LNR at the location and the conservation / educational aspects of it. The Head of Service – Neighbourhood Services would undertake research on what it would cost, etc. to manage this site as an LNR and to address the concerns around jet ski use and dog walking / fouling in the area, through measures such as a Public Space Protection Order.

Councillor Hooper, whose ward included the Old Harbour, broadly supported progressing the petition. He highlighted the need to assess the resources, timescales, and potential funding required to designate the site as an LNR and whether the Committee could agree this LNR designation in principle for referral to Cabinet.

The Director of Place explained that while the Old Harbour had potential as an LNR, other sites, such as Rhoose Point, might be higher priority and had to be considered as well. He added that designating the area as an LNR would require significant resources, such as from the Council's Neighbourhood Services and that the SINC status may offer stronger protection than an LNR.

The Chair subsequently asked if the LNR and SINC statuses and their respective protections could run in parallel with each other at the relevant site. The County Ecologist replied that the SINC status offered more protection in terms of preventing further development at the location. The LNR recognised the value of the local wildlife and landscape at the site, and the conservation of the environment there, as well as the benefit this would provide to the local community. The SINC / LNR could be run in parallel, and some sites also overlapped with sites of special scientific interest (SSSI).

The County Ecologist also confirmed that there would be no 'break' in the Ecologist role, due to him retiring, and his replacement would be starting immediately thereafter.

Councillor Hooper felt that the focus should be on the proposed site presented to the Committee, which had been brought forward, rather than any other potential sites at this time which had not been previously brought forward to the Committee before the meeting tonight.

Councillor Ernest supported the proposed LNR, citing the size of the petition, and further LNRs should be designated in the County to help protect biodiversity. He raised concerns around funding this proposal, citing the issues that had been faced securing funding from the Local Nature Partnership (LNP). However, there were important reasons to put forward this proposed LNR at the Old Harbour. The Director of Place reiterated that the proposal was in principle suitable, but consideration was needed around ongoing funding (via national government and other bodies) for this proposal and around other potential sites which may be more of a priority. Key sites for SINC's would also be considered as part of the LDP process.

Councillor Penn referred to the richness and diversity of the inter-tidal zones, such as the Old Harbour, and more research was needed to identify wildlife, etc., at the location. Planting seagrass at the location would be very beneficial and the salt marsh there was a rare thing that needed to be protected due to its benefits in terms of biodiversity. Work between the Committee, the Council, Dwr Cymru and Natural Resources Wales should be undertaken to reduce and prevent pollution at the Old Harbour site. Therefore, this site should be designated as a LNR or under another suitable form of designation / protection.

The Vice Chair said that the numbers involved in the petition to designate the Old Harbour as an LNR and the level of support at the Committee indicated that this site should be given a higher priority in relation to other possible sites. It would also be useful to have a list of potential LNR or similar sites within the County. The Director of Place explained that a list did exist, as part of the list of local areas identified as potential SINC's in the LDP and its proposed replacement. The SINC designation could provide further protections as compared to simply having the LNR one alone. Current resources meant that not all these sites could be progressed and designated at this time, coupled with statutory and planning considerations.

Councillor Wiliam welcomed and broadly supported the proposed LNR at the Old Harbour, as well as this report highlighting the understaffing and resources issues faced by the Council. He urged the Council to not do anything that might introduce to the local habitat invasive species, such as introducing different kinds of grasses, and therefore a proper audit of the area and its flora and fauna was needed. The County Ecologist stated that coastal salt marshes were an incredibly rare habitat, and there was a lot of knowledge already accumulated around the habitat at Old Harbour and what the potential risks were. Designating the area as a LNR could help to ensure the importance and protection of local wildlife and the habitat already in place and it would include a management plan to help cover this.

Following its discussion on the petition and report, Committee subsequently

## RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Committee agrees, in principle, that a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) be declared at the Old Harbour site at Barry.
- (2) T H A T additional work would be required to identify the resource requirements for designating the Old Harbour site as a Local Nature Reserve. This additional work / process should also consider other potential sites in the Vale of Glamorgan that may also warrant being designated as a LNR as well.
- (3) T H A T the Vale of Glamorgan Council work with Barry Action for Nature and any other relevant groups to ensure that work be undertaken to identify and address any immediate risks to wildlife at the Old Harbour site. That work should also consider any mitigating action that could be taken immediately.
- (4) T H A T Welsh Water / Dwr Cymru and Natural Resources Wales be invited to attend this Committee at its next meeting in March, in order to address the issue of bathing water quality and the potential impact of sewage discharge on wildlife in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- (5) T H A T the above recommendations be referred to Cabinet for their consideration and comment.

### Reason for recommendations

(1-5) For Cabinet and any relevant Council officers to consider the recommendations made by the Place Scrutiny Committee regarding the Petition Submission to declare a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) at Barry's Old Harbour and the related report."

Attached as Appendix – Report to Place Scrutiny Committee: 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2026

Meeting of:	<b>Place Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Tuesday, 20 January 2026</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Place Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	<b>Petition Submission – Declare a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) at Barry’s Old Harbour.</b>
Purpose of Report:	To allow the Scrutiny Committee to consider a public petition submitted relating to a proposed declaration for a local nature reserve, to be located at Barry’s Old Harbour.
Report Owner:	Director of Corporate Resources.
Responsible Officer:	Mark Thomas, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	As the report is Council wide, no Elected Members were consulted. Democratic Services. Director of Place. Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services. County Ecologist - Regeneration Section.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter outside of the Policy Framework and Budget and is a matter for Council.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council's petition scheme was agreed on 7th March, 2022, and implemented on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2022. This sets out how members of the public may submit a petition (including e-petitions) and how the Council would respond to any submissions.</li> <li>On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025 a petition from R. Curtis was submitted, on behalf of Barry Action for Nature calling on the Council to “Declare a local nature reserve at Barry’s Old Harbour to help protect local wildlife’. As Lead Petitioner, R. Curtis, will be invited to present the petition at the meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> January, and in line with the Council’s petition scheme, will be afforded 3 minutes speaking time in which to address the Committee.</li> <li>The Place Scrutiny Committee is therefore requested to debate and scrutinise the petition and the issues surrounding it, and to refer any recommendations on to Cabinet.</li> <li>The report also sets out information from the relevant Council officers outlining the Council’s current position and proposals.</li> </ul>

## **Recommendation**

1. That the Committee considers the petition submitted concerning the declaration of a local nature reserve, located at Barry's Old Harbour and refer any recommendations to Cabinet.

## **Reason for Recommendation**

1. To allow the Scrutiny Committee to consider the petition and for any recommendations to be referred to Cabinet.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Section 42 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, placed a legal duty on principal Councils in Wales to make and publish a petition scheme setting out how the Council would handle and respond to petitions, including electronic petitions (e-petitions).
- 1.2 There was a duty for the petition scheme to set out: (a) how a petition may be submitted to the Council; (b) how and by when the Council would acknowledge receipt of a petition; (c) the steps the Council may take in response to a petition received by it; (d) the circumstances (if any) in which the Council may take no further action in response to a petition; and (e) how and by when the Council would make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.
- 1.3 The Council's new petition scheme was agreed by Full Council on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2022, and the scheme was implemented on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2022.
- 1.4 Following review, a revised scheme was agreed by Council on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2025. A copy of the current scheme can be viewed via the following link:  
[25-12-01 – Petition Scheme revised 2025](#)
- 1.5 The Scheme sets out: 1) That all petitions will be managed through Democratic Services. 2) The specific information and details that the petition and e-petition should contain. 3) Details of the process for the creation of an e-petition and information required from the Lead Petitioner. 4) The issues that a petition can or cannot relate to. 5) That Democratic and Legal Services will carry out an initial check to ensure that a petition is admissible and respond within 7 working days to all petitions submitted and requests to create an e-petition. 6) If a petition or e-petition meets the threshold of 100 signatories, then depending on the subject matter and advice from the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer, this will be presented to a meeting of the Council, the Cabinet or a Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.6 On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025 a petition from R. Curtis was submitted, on behalf of Barry Action for Nature calling on the Council to "Declare a local nature reserve at Barry's Old Harbour to help protect local wildlife'.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** The petition states: “Saltwater marsh is one of the rarest habitats in the UK. The Old Harbour’s saltwater marsh supports wintering red listed species such as Curlew and Whimbrel. It also supports other waders and seabirds such as Shelduck, Grey Heron, little Egret, Knot and Redshank. We call on the Vale of Glamorgan Council to declare this area a Local Nature Reserve which can contribute to the Welsh Government’s aim of protecting 30% of Wales for nature by 2030. We are concerned that jet ski users and some irresponsible dog walkers are disturbing resting and feeding birds. We are also concerned at the sewage pollution currently being discharged into this harbour. Please help us protect our local wildlife.”
- 2.2** The reason given within the petition as to why this was important, was due to wildlife throughout the UK facing the destruction of much of their habitat, and therefore a desperate need for more LNRs to reverse this trend.
- 2.3** In terms of the supporting petition, there had been 604 signatures received for the hard copy version distributed, plus 3 signatures for a previous e-petition on this topic (hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council), meaning a total of 607 signatures had been received in support of the petition.
- 2.4** As Lead Petitioner, R. Curtis, will be invited to present the petition at the meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> January, and in line with the Council’s petition scheme, will be afforded 3 minutes speaking time in which to address the Committee.
- 2.5** The Place Scrutiny Committee is therefore requested to debate and scrutinise the petition and the issues surrounding it, and to refer any recommendations on to Cabinet.
- 2.6** In response to the petition, the Director of Place, the Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services and County Ecologist - Regeneration Section have been requested to provide information regarding the Council’s position and proposals. These are set out in the following paragraphs.
- 2.7** In principle this location could be considered as a LNR but with the following points in mind:
- 2.7.1** It would have to have sufficient wildlife value to warrant designation. An initial search on Aderyn reveals that there was about 20 or so species identified under section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which are of conservation concern. Most of these are estuarine birds or birds of prey though there are a few butterflies and moths.
- 2.7.2** The Bay also represents one of the only opportunities for Seagrass planting in the Vale, which is known for prodigious carbon capture. There have been discussions with the Seagrass Project about such opportunities as part of the Coastal Development project. However, it should be noted that due to lack of funds, the Coastal Project is in abeyance at this time.

- 2.7.3 The guidance is clear that the Council should have aims and objectives in declaring a LNR, an idea of how it will manage it, monitor it, engage the public, opportunities for education and what the costs are.
- 2.7.4 The potential for this location to be declared a LNR should be considered in conjunction with other possible locations within the County, which may, for various reasons, be considered to be a higher priority for such a designation, such as Rhoose Point.
- 2.7.5 Funding for the proposed LNR, and the challenges around it, needed to be considered. This would need to rely on potential sources of external funding, such as the Local Nature Partnership (LNP), although this could not be guaranteed. It should also be noted that funding for the current Vale LNP would only be secured until March 2027. This was due to both Place and Neighbourhood services being under severe budgetary pressures and therefore having to look for outside financial support to take this forward.
- 2.8** The Council currently faced several challenges in undertaking the proposal to declare the Old Harbour in Barry as an LNR. This broke down into:
  - 2.8.1 Resources – changes in staffing and workload. For example, the imminent retirement of the County Ecologist and his replacement by a new member of staff in this role, who although experienced would be inheriting and handling the ongoing workload which means that the Council could not commit to this proposal at this time.
  - 2.8.2 Funding. As outlined in 2.7.5. current budgetary pressures for the relevant Council directorates and departments meant that other sources of funding would need to be sought, but this would rely on external funding and support which could not be guaranteed.
  - 2.8.3 Due to the previous points raised, this proposal could not be pursued at this time and should be reconsidered in the next financial year.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1 The Petition Scheme contributes to the achievement of several aspects of the Council's Corporate Plan and Annual Delivery Plan. The Petition Scheme and subsequent Guide therefore sit under the continued 'Open' value and Objective 1: To work with and for our communities of the new plan which sets out that activities will reflect the importance of effective involvement, communication and engagement to understand and respond to the diverse needs of the community.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1 As set out in the body of the report.

## **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

**5.1** As set out in the body of the report.

### **Employment**

**5.2** None

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

**5.3** As set out in the body of the report.

## **6. Background Papers**

None.