

Written Representation 1

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 March 2026 19:31

To: Democratic <Democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk>

Subject: Scrutiny meeting Tuesday 24th March. Objection to Aqua park

Dear sir/madam

I am exceptionally disappointed to hear that the council are still considering the aqua park returning to cosmeston lakes.

The evidence is quite clear from the conclusion of Thomson report that there is no confidence that legislative breaches by the council and Aqua park have been addressed.

Cosmeston is a haven for wildlife. Starry Stonewort, water voles, and many other species call it their home. It a SSSI site, the wardens have worked very hard to encourage native flora, fauna and species to thrive here. Now since the Aqua park arrived with now have invasive Zebra Mussels from the equipment and we also have Killer Shrimp eDNA. It is a breach of biosecurity and devastating for the species they attack.

There is also the issue of water quality. For years people have not been allowed to swim in the lakes due to its previous usage and history. Samples have been found to have twice the sale limit of E. Coli and the water quality has always been very poor. Furthermore when the equipment was there last year, it was covered in bird poo, the equipment used was not properly cleaned nor users and staff were bothered by the cleanliness of lifejackets etc.

The aqua park is an ugly eyesore in a tranquil setting. People come to experience a natural setting. A better home for it would be Barry docks for example.

I fail to understand why the council insisted this was a suitable site for the aqua park despite thousands of residents objecting. I fail to understand why swimming in there is

now deemed safe when nothing has changed. This park is a major health risk to individuals using it not to mention the wildlife it is affecting. The greed of the council to make money is worrying, you are employed by the residents who pay large sums of monthly in council tax for a service. A service we are telling you we do not want at cosmeston.

I urge the council to discount cosmeston as a suitable site for the aqua park and seek another more suitable site for its use.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Written Representation 2

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 March 2026 17:38

To: Democratic <Democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk>

Subject: Aquapark

I am writing to have on record that I thought having the aquapark at Cosmeston last year was fantastic. It was enjoyed by many and is an ideal location with easy access to the water.

If there's an option for it to return, I would be very happy.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

Written Representation 3

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 March 2026 16:21

To: Democratic <Democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk>

Subject: Cosmeston Nature Reserve

I am writing to express my strong feelings about the AquaPark returning .I have keenly followed the research, read the Thompson report,the pilot evaluation,the NRW evaluation and feedback re endangered species. I've understood about the starry stonewort,the zebra mussels and the killer shrimp.I'm horrified that you councillors have ignored protests,petitions, expert opinion and facts and seriously want it to return . You proudly announce profits of up to £1m to the area and want to further push this agenda over the safety of children swimming in and ingesting polluted and dangerous waters.

Children were sick after swimming in Cardiff Bay AquaPark and also in Cosmeston AquaPark.The area is a nature reserve and should remain so. Invest in the much neglected medieval village to attract visitors, and leave the lake in peace for wildlife to enjoy.

Yours [REDACTED]

Written Representation 4

Aqua Park at Cosmeston;

Scrutiny Meeting at Vale of Glamorgan County Council, scheduled for Tuesday 24th March 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a resident of [REDACTED] for over 40 years, I wish to submit my views on the belief that the Vale Council has refused to rule out the reintroduction of an Aqua Park to the Cosmeston Lakes Country Park in future years.

Having seen the development of the Park since its' inception in 1978, and indeed recalling the industrial quarrying activity at Downswood in the 1960s, I believe that the transformation of the area by the Council and its' predecessors has been of significant benefit to the local and wider community in terms of creating an enjoyable experience for those living in an otherwise urban environment .

However when there was a perceived need to introduce this Aqua Park idea to the western lake in 2025, there was real concern expressed by large numbers of local ratepayers. Many people saw the inappropriate destruction of a peaceful environment for both those who enjoyed the original concept of the park together with the effects on the flora and fauna which had become established over the preceding 50 years or so.

I should therefore like to entreat the Council not to permit the Aqua Park to return, for the following reasons.

1. **The “experiment” last year** wherein this activity was permitted for a few weeks in the summer months revealed a number of issues which either had not been fully thought through or manifested directly the deleterious effect on the peaceful nature of the park. These have been fully rehearsed by others so I shall not repeat them here.
2. **The intrusive effect of this Aqua Park**(together with the proposed building of 576 dwellings and the new school already nearing completion at Lower Cosmeston Farm) on the adjacent countryside conflicts directly with the Welsh Government's directives on maintaining and developing a “Green” theme in areas in Wales such as that between Penarth and Lavernock and this aspect must be reconsidered by your Council. I refer, here, in particular to the **Environment(Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) Wales Bill passed in February 2026. This Bill together with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the Well-Being of future generations Act 2015** seem to have been ignored in permitting such activities as an Aqua Park at Cosmeston. **The Office of Environmental Governance (Wales)** will surely question the permission to proceed with such activities

3. It is understood that one of the reasons for allowing the Aqua Park , was the need to create a further **income stream** for the Council's finances. The recent announcement of the 5.5% increase in Council tax plus the additional 1% represents the highest increase for any Council in Wales and among the highest in the UK. I respectfully submit there are several ways of increasing available funds other than ruining an environmental asset such as Cosmeston,by examining cost reduction potential in administrative and other areas.
4. As I mentioned above,it is not my intention to rehearse all the work already undertaken by other organisations who have put forward logical and compelling reasons not to pursue a policy of urbanisation in a beautiful part of the Vale,but the real issues they have put forward must be listened to and taken fully on board.In particular,the need to permit the **natural habitat and the unique qualities of Cosmeston Lakes to be maintained as an oasis of nature** must be very seriously considered in your review.
5. The contribution of the Aqua Park, last year to **traffic congestion and associated delays** to local and national businesses and the local population at large on the only road in the area,the B4267,was significant in the warm days of 2025

For these and so many reasons put forward in particular by Save Cosmeston and the Vale and other organisations, I submit these concerns for consideration by your Scrutiny meeting tomorrow. Please think very carefully about the issues I and others have put forward.

Thank you for your attention,

Yours Faithfully



Written Representation 5

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 March 2026 14:38
To: Democratic <Democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: A written representation to the Vale of Glamorgan Place Scrutiny Committee 24/3/26

A written representation to the Vale of Glamorgan Place Scrutiny Committee 24/3/26

Dear Members of the Place Scrutiny Committee,

I would like to thank all Vale of Glamorgan residents who have shown up to protect the cherished nature reserve that is Cosmeston Lakes from the Aqua Park. The passion and dedication from residents to preserve the natural environment has been clear to see at the various protests. I would also like to recognise those who have worked tirelessly over the last year to represent the voices of the thousands who signed the petition to prevent this pilot from going ahead.

When the Vale of Glamorgan Council declared a nature emergency in 2021, they promised to 'safeguard the County's natural environment'.^[1] The UK, and Wales, is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, and it is the role of our elected bodies to preserve what biodiversity we do have with the upmost sincerity.

It is therefore extremely concerning to read the conclusion of the Thomson Report: 'we cannot confidently state that concerns regarding biodiversity and legislative compliance have been adequately addressed'.^[2]

It is even more concerning then, to see that the council conclude in their review of the pilot (Resolution 1b) that 'from an ecological and legal standpoint, the Aqua Park's operation was compatible with the continued breeding of protected species on the site'.

^[1]https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/press_and_communications/latest_news/2021/July/Vale-of-Glamorgan-Council-declares-nature-emergency.aspx

^[2] An independent review sought by the Council to assess the ecological grounding of the pilot, particularly with respect to breeding birds and protected species

The Council's review and the independent ecological assessment conducted by Thomson appear to reach conflicting conclusions.

I strongly urge this committee to undertake a rigorous examination of all available evidence and viewpoints. This includes the contributions from members of the public, relevant advocacy groups, Natural Resources Wales, Shared Regulatory Services, and the various ecological reports. It is equally important to consider the council's own assessments. Such scrutiny should be conducted with the utmost diligence, reflecting the profound significance our natural environment clearly holds for the community.

The depth and care devoted to this review must match the importance of preserving Cosmeston Lakes and the wider environment for future generations.



Leader of Wales Green Party and Penarth resident

Written Representation 6

Ecological Statement for Scrutiny – [REDACTED] – Student Ecologist

Whilst there was an independent review carried out by Thompson, concerns still remain for the ecological integrity of Cosmeston lakes going forward and potential concerns around the aqua park returning. There was clear displacement of water fowl during the time the aqua park was present during its trial period in 2025, with many bird species now returning to the lake since its departure. The long term effects of the presence of an aqua park on nesting schedule one species for example, or on neighbouring water voles, may not be immediately clear. There are still concerns amongst the public around indirect effects on the SSSI features of the site, including the starry stonewort, through disturbance, redistribution of bird use and biosecurity risks.

There are also concerns over marginal habitat degradation of reedbeds, marginal scrub and wetland vegetation which could have a negative effect on nesting and foraging behaviours of bird and mammal species in the future. The potential impacts of the aqua park on the eight species of bats that are known to roost in the area have not been addressed or assessed in anyway. Likewise for amphibians and reptiles which may occupy the surrounding vegetation and shoreline. There has been no Water Vole surveys carried out in the surrounding area despite Water Voles being released into the area in 2017 and evidence of them being there. ACER openly admitted to the areas being difficult to survey so have not attempted to do so, stating there is no emergent vegetation near the board walk, however there has not been any consideration made to the noise, disturbance and general presence that the aqua park would have on the voles.

The Thompson report was written as an independent review of the initial ecological reports and while it scrutinises the inappropriate nesting bird surveys by ACER. There still remains significant uncertainty around the impacts the aqua park will have on nesting birds, particularly the schedule one species like the Cetti's warbler.

Invasive species and general biosecurity of the lake remains a large ecological concern. In principle, risk may have been reduced but there is no evidence that the risk has been eliminated. A failure in this would have catastrophic consequences. There has already been concerns that 'killer shrimp' are present in the lake since the departure of the aqua park. This is highly concerning.

The submitted information indicates that the proposal's main ecological risks are predominantly indirect rather than direct. The key impact pathways include: potential effects on the Cosmeston Lakes SSSI, particularly its aquatic features, through increased turbidity, recreational disturbance, and shifts in bird distribution; impacts on protected and priority bird species—especially breeding wetland birds and Schedule 1

Cetti's warbler—arising from noise, visual disturbance, installation activities, and ongoing seasonal use during the breeding period; and biosecurity risks associated with the transfer of invasive non-native species from Cardiff Bay into a designated freshwater environment.

The applicant's technical documentation argues that these impacts would be negligible. This conclusion is based on factors including the floating, deep-water design, the absence of starry stonewort within the footprint and a 50 m buffer, the existing recreational use of the eastern lake, the identification of only a single Cetti's warbler territory located over 100 m away, and the inclusion of a comprehensive invasive species control strategy. These points substantially narrow the scope of potential impacts and warrant consideration.

However, the independent Thomson review raises significant concerns regarding the reliability of the applicant's ornithological conclusions. It highlights key limitations in the evidence base, including unclear installation timing, inconsistent data recording, lack of habitat assessment, absence of full-season baseline data, and insufficient justification for assumptions around bird habituation and negligible effects. The review concludes that it cannot confidently confirm that biodiversity impacts and legislative requirements have been adequately addressed, and recommends the collection of a full year of baseline data alongside an agreed programme of monitoring, mitigation, and enhancement prior to operation.

The most significant unresolved issue relates to potential impacts on breeding birds, including Schedule 1 Cetti's warbler and other wetland species. This uncertainty extends to the broader ecological implications of increased recreational pressure within the SSSI. While issues such as turbidity and the presence of starry stonewort are addressed in the applicant's submission, these conclusions rely primarily on applicant-generated evidence and lack independent verification.

Ultimately the burden of proof lies not only with the aqua park but the council itself to establish with no doubt that no harm will come to protected species and priority habitats which thus far, despite ecological reports they have been unable to do so. In my opinion there remains too much ambiguous language and uncertainty around the impacts on wildlife for this installation to be considered ever again. Please see attached my own ecological assessment of all reports carried out relating to this.

Appendix 1.

Ecological Review		
Review of the submitted ecological documents, technical notes and plans in relation to the actual and potential effects of the Aqua Park on designated sites, protected and priority species, and habitats at Cosmeston Lakes.		
Ecologist:	Acer Ecology	
Date:	27 April 2025 and 1 June 2025	
Site Address:	Cosmeston Lakes, Vale of Glamorgan	
Works Proposed:	Aqua Park	
Relevant policies:	· Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 · Environment (Wales) Act 2016 · Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) · Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) · Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) – Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition, 2023) · British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) – Nesting Birds Guidance	
Comments:	Submitted information:	· Ecological Technical Note, Cosmeston Lakes, Vale of Glamorgan: Proposed Aqua Park, Acer Ecology, April 2025. · Ecological Technical Note on Cetti's Warbler, Cosmeston Lakes, Vale of Glamorgan: Proposed Aqua Park, Acer Ecology, June 2025. · Independent Report Review – Technical Note, Aqua Park, Cosmeston Lakes, Thomson Environmental Consultants for Vale of Glamorgan Council, November 2025. · Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Sully to Cosmeston Active Travel Route, Arcadis, September 2023.

Potential Impacts on protected and priority species and habitats	Designated Sites Cosmeston Lakes is itself a SSSI, Local Nature Reserve and country park, so the proposal introduces a new recreational use within a designated freshwater site rather than adjacent to one. NRW specifically raised turbidity, waterfowl displacement, invasive non-native species and water vole as key impact pathways. Although Acer relies on a floating, deep-water design and the absence of starry stonewort within the proposed footprint to conclude negligible effects, those conclusions remain dependent on the applicant's own evidence. On the submitted information, indirect effects on SSSI features through disturbance, redistribution of bird use and biosecurity risk remain material concerns. Priority Habitats The proposal does not appear to remove wetland margin habitats directly, but the submitted documents identify reedbed, marginal scrub, dense wetland vegetation, woodland and grassland around the eastern lake. These habitats are functionally important, particularly for breeding birds. The main concern is therefore functional degradation through repeated disturbance rather than direct habitat loss. Given the independent criticism of the bird evidence, a negligible-effect conclusion for these wetland habitats is not currently secured. Bats No bat-specific assessment has been submitted for the Aqua Park. The wider PEA records eight bat species in the wider area and identifies surrounding woodland and hedgerows as suitable for foraging and commuting. There is no clear evidence of direct roost loss from the floating structures, but indirect effects from lighting, evening activity and lake-edge disturbance have not been properly assessed. Bats are not the principal concern, but this pathway has not been fully addressed. Birds Bird impacts are the strongest ecological concern. Acer concludes that disturbance would be negligible and that a single Cetti's warbler territory lay more than 100m from the Aqua Park, with no need for curtailment or monitoring. However, the independent Thomson review does not support that conclusion. It identifies inadequate baseline data, missed early breeding season coverage, unclear installation timing, inconsistent plotting and lack of habitat assessment, and states it cannot confidently conclude that biodiversity and legislative
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		compliance concerns have been resolved. On the submitted evidence, significant uncertainty remains over effects on breeding wetland birds, including Schedule 1 Cetti's warbler, and future operation could give rise to further disturbance and legal risk. Reptiles The wider PEA records reptiles in the surrounding landscape, but the Aqua Park submissions do not identify a clear direct impact pathway from the floating infrastructure itself. Any risk would be linked to associated shoreline or vegetation works, which are not described in ecological detail. Reptiles are therefore not a principal issue, but the pathway has not been specifically assessed. Amphibians (incl. GCN) The wider PEA records amphibians, including great crested newt, in the wider area, but the Aqua Park material does not identify a clear direct impact pathway from the in-lake operation itself. As with reptiles, any risk would depend on associated shoreline or terrestrial disturbance that is not addressed in the submissions. Amphibians are not the main concern on the current evidence, but the assessment is limited. Invasive Species Invasive non-native species remain a major ecological concern because NRW specifically identified the risk of transfer from Cardiff Bay to Cosmeston Lakes SSSI. The submitted biosecurity measures may reduce that risk in principle, but they do not demonstrate that it has been effectively eliminated, and any failure could result in serious and lasting harm to the SSSI. On the submitted information, this impact pathway remains significant and weighs materially against the proposal. Potential Impacts Summary Based on the submitted information, the proposal's principal ecological risks are indirect rather than direct. The main material impact pathways are: · effects on the Cosmeston Lakes SSSI and its aquatic interest through increased turbidity, recreational disturbance and disturbance-driven redistribution of bird use within the lake system; · effects on protected and priority birds, especially breeding wetland birds and Schedule 1 Cetti's warbler, through noise, visual disturbance, installation activity and repeated seasonal operational use during the breeding season; · biosecurity risk from the transfer of invasive non-native species from Cardiff Bay equipment into a designated freshwater lake. The applicant's technical notes seek to demonstrate that these effects would be negligible. They rely on the floating, deep-water design; absence of starry stonewort within the proposed footprint and 50m buffer; existing recreational use of the eastern lake; a claimed single Cetti's warbler territory more than 100m away; and a detailed invasive species control package. Those submissions materially narrow the likely impact pathways and cannot be ignored. However, the independent Thomson review fundamentally weakens confidence in the applicant's bird conclusions. It identifies significant limitations in the breeding bird evidence base, including unclear installation timing, inconsistent plotting, lack of habitat assessment, absence of full-season baseline data and insufficient justification for conclusions on habituation and no effect. Its headline conclusion is that it cannot confidently state that concerns regarding biodiversity and legislative compliance have been adequately addressed, and it recommends a full baseline year plus an agreed monitoring, mitigation and enhancement strategy before future operation. The greatest unresolved ecological concern is the potential effect on breeding birds, including Schedule 1 Cetti's warbler and other wetland breeders, together with the consequential uncertainty this creates for the wider ecological acceptability of intensified recreational use within the SSSI. The lake feature issues of turbidity and starry stonewort
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		are addressed in the applicant’s material but remain dependent on applicant-led evidence rather than being independently validated. Invasive non-native species remain a major ecological concern because NRW specifically identified the risk of transfer from Cardiff Bay to Cosmeston Lakes SSSI. The submitted biosecurity measures may reduce that risk in principle, but they do not demonstrate that it
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		has been effectively eliminated, and any failure could result in serious and lasting harm to the SSSI. On the submitted information, this impact pathway remains significant and weighs materially against the proposal.
Conclusion:	Objection On the submitted information, the proposal is not acceptable in ecological terms. It has not been robustly demonstrated that the Aqua Park can be installed and operated without material harm to the Cosmeston Lakes SSSI, breeding wetland birds or the ecological function of the lake margins. The principal unresolved concern is disturbance to birds, including Schedule 1 Cetti's warbler, where the independent review does not support the applicant's conclusion of negligible effect. Invasive non-native species also remain a significant unresolved risk given the sensitivity of the site and the potentially serious consequences of any biosecurity failure. The current evidence base is therefore insufficient to conclude that the proposal would avoid significant ecological harm, and the objection remains justified.	

Written Representation 7

Dear Place Committee,

I am writing as a very concerned resident of the Vale of Glamorgan regarding the processes around the Aqua Park pilot and its review.

From the beginning, it has not been easy to have followed the council's reasoning, decision making and evidence base for this project. This has become increasingly difficult as FOI requests, have brought to light the concerns of NRW and Shared Regulatory Services along the way.

Consistently, it has felt to me that the Council had a plan, and they were going with it no matter what was presented to them.

As a member of the public, it has been very upsetting to think that the vulnerable ecological site at Cosmeston would be damaged for a fiscal experiment. Just because a project is only lasting for one summer season, does not mean its impact can be brushed aside, and it should be prepared for and assessed as though it is there for the long term. Damage to our environment cannot be reviewed and – if reviewed as negative - undone afterwards. As such I feel that a much higher level of prudence should have been afforded to this pilot sited in an SSSI location.

Thomson Report

It is clear from reading the Thomson report (a report sought by the Council to review the pilot and the work undertaken by Aqua Park's own ecologists Acer Ecology) that my concerns, and those of numerous other voices, about the minimal preparatory ecological work undertaken, were legitimate all along.

The report is a pretty serious critique of the work done ahead of the trial in respect to breeding birds. Thomson concludes very clearly and succinctly that it is not possible to say for sure that the decision making has taken place on a firm legal and ecological basis.

There are numerous issues raised throughout this report about the work done by Acer Ecology. Yet the Council continues to describe this work as 'robust' in its Cabinet review and a reasonable basis for decision making all along.

I am particularly appalled to see that the Cabinet minutes around the pilot review seem to make entirely contradictory conclusions to those of Thomson, and indicate that this report has not been read and understood properly. As such I urge this scrutiny committee to establish whether the Council have truly understood what the Thomson report has said: starting at the conclusions, and then delving into much greater detail.

It is concerning to me to see plans of a 12 month baseline study of the birds following the Thomson report. How can a baseline be conducted post-Aqua Park? Should this not have been required prior to the pilot?

What was the purpose of spending taxpayers' money on an independent ecology report (badly needed and far too late) if the findings are to be disregarded by the Cabinet?

Given the critical nature of Thomson's report, and the limited focus to breeding birds, can the scrutiny committee request similar pieces of independent work evaluating the underpinning ecological rationale for the soundness of the pilot around other areas: water voles, starry stonewort, all other protected species, INNS etc?

Will the council accept Thomson's critique of the Acer work and cease referring to the underpinning work completed by Acer as 'robust'?

Starry Stonewort

Another matter which I am particularly concerned about is that of the Starry Stonewort: the notifiable feature of the SSSI. There is no mention in the Council's review of the unfortunate fact that Starry Stonewort was indeed present in the Eastern Lake during the pilot period despite assurances that it was only in the Western Lake (confirmed now by NRW).

There is no mention of what assessment will be done as to whether the project has harmed this feature, and no mention of how it will be assessed and protected in the future if similar leisure opportunities are deemed suitable to go ahead.

There is no mention in the review as to the plans to remove the Aqua Park infrastructure including the buoys with ropes attached to concrete anchors. I believe that the buoys and ropes have since been removed, but are the concrete anchors still in the lake?

Why did the council not refer to this matter at all in its Cabinet review as custodians of the SSSI?

Planning

Following on from the matter of the concrete buoys and the infrastructure, I note that the overflow carpark at Cosmeston is still full of shipping containers.

Given that this project was a pilot, Aqua Park will not be returning this year, and no planning application was ever opened, why are they still on site? What are the plans for them to be removed? Is their presence still covered by permitted development after all this time, and the decision having been made for Aqua Park not to return this year? Why is this not covered, or even mentioned, in the cabinet's report?

Further, there is still a planning enforcement case under investigation regarding the CCTV infrastructure, and the council's 'review and reconsideration' of the planning matters promised in legal communication with Vale Action Group appears not to have been completed.

Why has this not been conducted as part of the Cabinet's review to the pilot, or even mentioned in the review?

Financial Impact

My final concern is to request more in depth scrutiny of the finances surrounding the pilot. I believe that residents, and members of the council deserve more detailed information.

The Council has always argued that the purpose of exploring leisure opportunities at Cosmeston was to raise funds for the park's 'future sustainability, protection and enhancement', particularly during times of 'considerable ongoing financial pressure'.

The Cabinet report states that an estimate of £645,000 was 'spent' by visitors, and that the total economic impact was almost a million.

It is further claimed on the Vale of Glamorgan Facebook post of the 30th January, that the project brought 'nearly £1 million to the local economy'. Basic understanding of economics shows that just because money was spent in the Vale of Glamorgan, it doesn't stay in the Vale of Glamorgan if it is spent at the business of a company from Lichfield, England, running a short term pilot in the area.

Additionally, money spent is not equal to money made after expenses have been covered. The distinction between revenue and profit is essential to legitimise the Council's purpose of the pilot: reinvestment

I believe this statement made by the Council on the 30th to be misleading to the general public and request a more in depth scrutiny of the financial gain given that they are the reasoning behind this pilot.

- Of the money 'spent', how much was profit?
- Of the money 'spent', how much did the Council receive?
- How much of the economic impact was raised from parking fees?
- Precisely how is the nearly £1 million figure arrived at?
- Can the Council provide a breakdown of revenue retained locally versus funds paid to external operators, including Aqua Park's parent company?

- Exactly how much money will be reinvested back into Cosmeston following the supposed gains of this pilot?
- What will the money reinvested back into Cosmeston spent on, and in particular, how will it benefit biodiversity?

I remain unconvinced that the decision-making process has been conducted appropriately, particularly in light of the Thomson review and its conclusions, as well as the Cabinet's interpretation of this review. The number of unresolved matters is substantial (far beyond what is included in this letter), and these issues require thorough attention. I urge the committee to scrutinise all conclusions reached by the Cabinet report, not only on my own behalf and that of other concerned residents, but also for the benefit of our vulnerable natural environment, which lacks the ability to advocate for itself. Furthermore, I strongly recommend that the committee insist upon Cabinet addressing the numerous outstanding matters and ensuring they are incorporated into the Cabinet's review.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Written submission by Vale Action Group: for consideration by the Place Scrutiny Committee on 24th March 2026

1. Ecology

- Given the early **feedback from NRW**, and the post-pilot findings of the **Thomson report**, we argue that the ecological surveys were inadequate and the Council failed to apply appropriate scrutiny or oversight.
- We also argue that the Council are misrepresenting the findings of the Thomson report.

NRW asked the Council and Aqua Park to conduct a nesting bird survey at Cosmeston to ensure the development does not disturb Schedule 1 birds¹, in particular the Cetti's Warbler, which is known to nest near to the Aqua Park. This work was commissioned to a local firm, Acer Ecology, who submitted their report to the Council and NRW early June². Mid-June, just after the contracts were signed, NRW responded to the work critically. The important parts of NRW's comments, listed in the Appendix of the July technical note³, are:

- ***"NRW don't agree that the survey, in its current form, is sufficiently robust or appropriate to achieve its aims"***
- ***"The very fact that the report states that this is a departure from best practice is somewhat concerning, especially as this limitation does not appear to have been considered fully in the evaluation of the results"***
- ***"It is not clear how a conclusion of negligible [impact] has been derived"***

The Aqua Park opened anyway, based on the previous ecology reports which were now shown to be flawed by NRW. Acer Ecology responded to NRW's comments by performing extra surveys throughout July and August. In September, they published their final report. At the end of the pilot, the Council asked an impartial, third-party ecology firm, Thomson, to undertake an independent review of Acer Ecology's bird surveys, to provide "additional assurance that appropriate due diligence has been carried out", and to assess whether "concerns regarding biodiversity and legislative compliance have been adequately addressed".

Thomson's report⁴ is universally critical of Acer Ecology's work. It concluded: ***"Based on the above, we cannot confidently state that concerns regarding biodiversity and legislative compliance have been adequately addressed."*** The Council's evaluation report makes no mention of this conclusion, instead treating the report's quotations of Acer Ecology's claims as though they were the report's own independent findings..

¹ Schedule 1 birds, like the Cetti's Warbler and Kingfisher, carry the highest level of legal protection; disturbing them during nesting is a criminal offense under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

²

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Our%20Council/Press%20Office/P2754-Cosmeston-Lakes-Technical-Note-Cettis-Warbler-1-6-2025.pdf>

³

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Our%20Council/Press%20Office/P2754-Cosmeston-Lakes-Technical-Note-Cettis-Warbler-18-7-2025.pdf>

⁴

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Our%20Council/Press%20Office/Cosmeston/Thomson-Ecology-review.pdf>

2. Damage to the SSSI and Biosecurity

- SSSI Assent was granted by NRW on the understanding that the notified feature, Starry Stonewort, was not on the East Lake. During the pilot, divers' footage revealed the species widespread on the bed of east lake, even embedded in the anchoring system of the Aqua Park (Figure 1). The presence of the species on East Lake - now officially confirmed by NRW - calls into serious question the prospect of future assents being granted because there are plausible mechanisms of damage to the SSSI due to interaction of the ropes with Starry Stonewort (shown in Figure 2).



Figure 1: Starry Stonewort surrounding the anchoring system of the Aqua Park

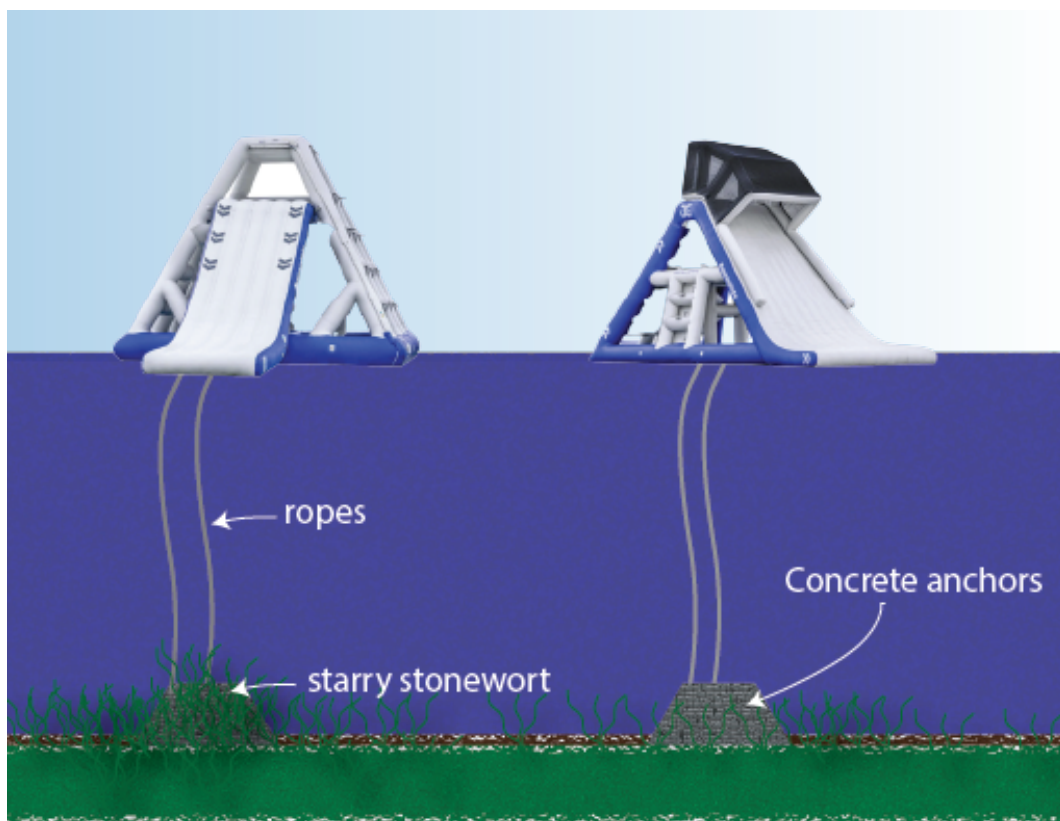


Figure 2: Mechanism of damage to starry stonewort - pendulum action of the ropes

- On Biosecurity, multiple breaches of agreed protocols have been observed. In the setup phase, pontoons covered in Zebra Mussels were found on the side of the lake, leading NRW to consider enforcement action. Then, a boat arrived and was immediately launched onto the lake. The assent conditions clearly state that boats should be subject to 8 months dry storage before entering the lake, but it is not clear whether any INNS protocols were observed at all. Vale Action Group understands that the boat may have come from Rutland water, which is a hotbed for invasive species, including killer shrimp, which was later discovered at Cosmeston via eDNA. The boat is being investigated by NRW as a potential breach of SSSI conditions.



Figure 3: Working boat anchored at the centre of East Lake.

3. Analysis of Water Quality at Cosmeston

- Vale Action Group has analysed the historic water quality samples at Cosmeston going back to 2017, revealing regular and severe spikes in *E. coli* and Enterococci during the bathing seasons.
- NRW and SRS both told the Council that the water quality at Cosmeston is officially poor (not even borderline) - which means the frequency and severity of the pollution spikes would be considered too risky for bathing under UK bathing regulations⁵.
- Cosmeston is not an official bathing water, so the Council went against the bathing regulations, instead using an operational monitoring scheme based on more frequent testing (twice per week). However, there is a 3-5 day delay getting the result back from the laboratory, so by time a pollution event is known people would already be exposed.
- As it stands, the policy is incredibly risky because the underlying water quality is so poor. We argue that the water quality is so poor that a recreational Aqua Park is not viable. Enough information is already known to make this determination.
- This season, two large pollution events were observed on East Lake. In August, an *E. coli* sample of close to twice the safe limit was recorded on the far side. In May, an Enterococci

⁵ UK Bathing Water Regulations 2013: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/1675>

sample of 2.5 times the safe limit was recorded near the shoreline, where users enter the water. The latter sample was obtained via FOI/EIR to PHW, and was not reported by Aqua Park.

Vale Action Group obtained water quality certificates from the Council (and subsequently the privately contracted certificates from PHW/Aqua Park). The results show classic poor water quality, with 25 samples in excess of safe limits⁶, including a result of 16,000 in July 2024, which is 16 times the safe limit for E. coli.

- 26th July 2017: **3,300** (3.3 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 26th July 2017: **1,000** (2.5 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 29th August 2017: **610** (1.5 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 11th September 2017: **1,000** (2.5 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 14th June 2018: **4,700** (4.7 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 14th June 2018: **710** (1.7 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 14th June 2018: **3,600** (3.6 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 14th June 2018: **490** (1.2 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 2nd September 2019: **2,200** (2.2 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 24th August 2020: **480** (1.2 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 5th July 2021: **490** (1.2 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 26th July 2021: **1,400** (1.4 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 26th July 2021: **3,600** (3.6 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 23rd August 2021: **1,400** (1.4 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 6th September 2021: **6,000** (6 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 6th September 2021: **3,000** (3 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 6th September 2021: **470** (1.2 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 6th September 2021: **560** (1.4 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- 30th August 2022: **1,100** (1.1 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 6th September 2022: **1200** (1.2 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 12th September 2023: **1,400** (1.4 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 8th July 2024: **16,000** (16 times the safe limit for E. coli)
- 8th July 2024: **1,670** (4 times the safe limit for Enterococci)
- **27th May 2025: 1,040 (2.5 times the safe limit for Enterococci) NOT REPORTED BY AQUA PARK!**
- **21st August 2025: 1,600 (1.6 times the safe limit for E. coli) DURING THE OPERATION OF THE AQUA PARK!**

Note that the above is based on monthly or twice monthly sampling, meaning pollution spikes are almost certainly being missed.

The Council's main mitigation is to conduct more regular sampling. However, the laboratory must culture the sample over a period of some 72 hours, meaning the results can take 3-5 days to return. Given that the pollution events are impossible to predict, the policy is unsuitable because users are already exposed before the result is known. If children (or adults) swallow contaminated water, they could become seriously ill. We argue that enough is already known about the historic water quality to rule out full immersion water activities, and therefore commissioning additional, expensive ecology surveys is a waste of resources.

⁶ Here, we take "safe limit" as Aqua Park's own thresholds, derived from World Aquatics Competition Guidance, designed for adult athletes

4. Planning and Legal Issues

In the council's response to our PAP dated 7th August 2025, it was advised that the matter of planning 'reflective of the councils commitment to monitor and review the impacts of the aqua park' would be referred back to the planning enforcement officer for review and reconsideration. We note the enforcement notice in relation to the CCTV infrastructure is still 'under investigation', our lawyers have heard nothing further and no mention of the planning review has been made in the evaluation.

Has this review taken place or not? Surely, this is a critical part of the evaluation process, particularly considering the mention of future considerations for both Cosmeston and Porthkerry.