

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

28 MARCH 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

AGREEMENT FOR THE COUNCIL TO HOST THE REGIONAL WALES COAST PATH OFFICER (SOUTH)

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the Corporate Director, Communities to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to be the hosting authority for the Regional Wales Coast Path (WCP) officer for the South region until the 31st March 2021.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

The Corporate Improvement Plan 2016 – 2020 contains the Council's Corporate Priorities. The appointment of the Regional Wales Coast Path officer links to Priority One – Supporting a Successful Economy.

3. Background.

- 3.1 The Wales Coastal Access Improvement Programme is a scheme funded by the Welsh Government (WG) via NRW to deliver its commitment to increase public access to the coast of Wales. In May 2012, the Wales Coast Path was officially opened and the route has been widely publicised both nationally and internationally.
- 3.2 The programme improved access along the coast both for local communities and for visitors to Wales through local path improvements and with specific sections suitable for the disabled, families with prams/buggies, for horse riders and for cyclists. The long-term aim was for a good quality all Wales Coastal Path to be developed linking up the existing trails like the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail. The first phase of the Coastal Access Programme ran from April 2007 to March 2013 and the second phase was completed between 2013 and 2015.
- 3.3 Funding and management arrangements for the Wales Coast Path were revised significantly from April 2015. This was in line with the views of WG, NRW and the local authorities that the WCP should be seen as a permanent responsibility of NRW, and delivery partners, with appropriate long term funding and management structures in place.
- 3.4 In March 2015, WG announced funding of £900,000 for 2015/16 for the ongoing delivery of the Wales Coast Path and associated works. This was further enhanced a year later by a ministerial announcement that committed the same amount per annum for the next 5 years i.e. up to the 31st March 2021.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 NRW working with partners have the responsibility for the management and promotion of the WCP at a national level. In line with original advice to Welsh Government NRW are now establishing a WCP management system based on:

- A national Management Group to ensure a consistent overview of delivery across Wales
- Regional Management Groups to plan, co-ordinate and oversee the delivery of work on the ground in five regions (North, Gwynedd, West, Pembrokeshire and South)
- WCP Promotion Partnership
- The employment of one Wales Coast Path officer in each of the five regions.

4.2 The Regional Officers for the South, West and North will be employed directly by NRW but seconded to, and line managed on a day to day basis by, an officer from within one of the local authorities within each of the three regions. Different arrangements currently exist for the two officers that cover the Pembrokeshire Coast path and Gwynedd Council area where those officers are directly employed by the local authority but grant aided by NRW. The Regional officers will monitor, maintain, improve and promote the Wales Coast Path in the region in which they are based in accordance with established Quality Standards.

4.3 Bridgend County Borough Council sits within the South region along with six other councils, namely Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, the Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Newport and Monmouthshire. Following discussions between the seven local authorities within the South region it was proposed that Bridgend should be the host authority for the South Regional Officer. As a result the regional officer will be line managed on a day to day basis by the Council's Rights of Way Manager.

4.4 NRW has drafted a Memorandum of Agreement and other associated documents for signing by the host authorities. These have now been considered by, and agreed to following a number of revisions, by officers from within the Communities, Operational and Partnership Services, and Chief Executive's Directorates. Authorisation is now being sought for the Corporate Director, Communities to sign the Memorandum of Agreement.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1. The approval by Cabinet for the Corporate Director, Communities to sign the Memorandum of Agreement with NRW has no effect on the Council's policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment Initial Screening has been undertaken using the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment toolkit and this has concluded that no further EIA is required. Any works that the Regional officer is subsequently involved with will either have an Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken or be designed in compliance with DDA Regulations and will be constructed similarly.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 The Council will be able to recover 'ancillary costs' (office accommodation and other related charges) for hosting the Regional Officer. However, the time spent managing the regional officer cannot be recovered. The time spent by the Rights of Way Manager in managing the regional officer will therefore be covered from within the existing Rights of Way budgets.

8. Recommendation.

That Cabinet approves; the Corporate Director, Communities signing a Memorandum of Agreement with Natural Resources Wales to be the hosting authority for the Regional Wales Coast Path officer for the South region until the 31st March 2021.

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CORPORATE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES
March 2017

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Background documents

None