

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CABINET

25 JULY 2017

### REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, COMMUNITIES

#### RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME- SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SCHEME

##### 1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the submission of a full application to the Rural Development Plan for Wales Sustainable Management Scheme and, if successful, to accept the resulting funding offer and enter into appropriate agreements.

##### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This work aligns with the following Corporate Priorities:

Smarter use of resources

To make the most of our physical assets, including school buildings

- Review assets and services and enable the successful transfer of those most suitable to community groups and organisations
- Ensure appropriate governance and compliance of all delivery
- Ensure successful management of natural resources

##### 3. Background.

- 3.1 The Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS) forms part of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) (2014-2020). Administered by Welsh Government (WG), it will provide financial support for a range of activities that will improve the management of natural resources and in doing so contribute to the well-being of rural communities. Grants can range from a minimum of £10,000 to a maximum of £700,000 to help start up and facilitate new collaborations through to landscape-scale ambitious co-ordinating actions and input from several parties to achieve lasting benefits across our communities. Both capital and revenue costs can be supported.
- 3.2 Kenfig Pool and Dunes was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1953, a Local Nature Reserve in 1978 and a National Nature Reserve (NNR) in 1989. Furthermore, in 2006, the majority of Kenfig dunes were designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), under the EC Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna), giving the site both national and international protection. The SAC was designated specifically for six features which are important in the European context: four habitat features on Annex I of the Directive and two species features on Annex II of the Directive. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) currently manages the site and has responsibilities in relation to delivering the requirements of the designations.

- 3.3 The need for investing in this sustainable management of Bridgend County's coastal landscape more broadly, and ways in which actions can support requirement of site designations, is evidenced in the Bridgend Landscape Character Assessment (2013) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) (2014). Once part of an extensive dune system the two sites of Kenfig National Nature Reserve (KNNR) and Merthyr Mawr are now separated by the limestone pavement of the Porthcawl Coastline, two golf courses and settled farmland.
- 3.4 Building on this research, and following the delivery of the pilot Kenfig Nature Project - jointly funded by the Rural Development Programme (RDP) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) - a stakeholder working group has been convened and consulted with specifically on the development of future action. This group has been key in shaping the SMS proposal and it includes the following:
- Bridgend County Borough Council (Lead Partner)
  - NRW
  - Landowners
  - Kenfig Trust
  - Kenfig NNR
  - Sker Farm
  - Pyle & Kenfig Golf Club
  - Royal Porthcawl Golf Club
  - Merthyr Mawr NNR
- 3.5 This working group then reports to the Coastal Partnership which in turn takes its strategic direction from the Bridgend County Destination Management Partnership.
- 3.6 An Expression of Interest was submitted to the SMS for this project in May 2016 but, despite achieving high scores on a number of key assessment criteria, was unsuccessful due to over subscription. A revised Expression of Interest was subsequently submitted and was approved in March 2017 with an invitation to submit a second stage application by September 2017.

#### **4. Current situation / proposal.**

- 4.1 This project aims to form a collaboration of nature reserve managers (local authority and NRW), landowners, golf clubs and farmers to sustainably manage the coastal landscape, improve the ecosystems in that landscape, increase biodiversity and connectivity between the two dune systems.
- 4.2 This will be done by undertaking habitat management and habitat creation, including:
- Pond creation
  - Establishing dune heathland
  - Halting dune stabilisation
  - Woodland planting
  - Restoration of hedges, fences and dry stone walls
- 4.3 The collaboration will support the golf clubs to obtain the Golf Environment Organisation (GEO) Certified ecolabel demonstrating their ongoing sustainable performance. If successful they will be the first Welsh golf courses to obtain this

certification. The project will improve walking opportunities and manage the impact of those walkers through better signage and path improvements.

## 5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

- 5.1 Agreements will need to be put in place with landowners for insurance purposes where works are undertaken on private land whilst under the responsibility of BCBC as overall project manager. Advice will be sought from the Council's Insurance and Risk Officer.

## 6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An initial EIA screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics and an EIA status of low priority is considered appropriate at this stage.

## 7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 The project will not place additional financial demands over and above existing budgets. All procurement process will be in line with BCBC policies and procedures and support will be provided by BCBC procurement department. Where there is a requirement for any legal/service agreements between BCBC and any other land owner these will be developed with support from BCBC legal and property departments.
- 7.2 The timeframe is proposed as starting on 1 January 2018 and ending on 31 December 2019. With the anticipated end date of December 2019, the project will provide additional external investment in KNNR, supporting BCBC's management of the site, and would be completed before the current lease arrangements for the Kenfig National Nature Reserve come to an end.
- 7.3 The project is costed at £312,541 at an intervention rate of 100%. All funds, commissioning and contract management will be managed by BCBC, with no funds being passed over to third parties, and the costs will be closely monitored throughout the project and should the situation arise then value engineering will take place to avoid any overspend.
- 7.4 A summary of the costs is as follows:

Work package	Elements	Estimated Cost (£) Excluding VAT
<b>Kenfig NNR</b>	Habitat management Boundary Condition Survey Rights of way (ROW) Management of Volunteers	£80,000
<b>Golf Clubs</b>	Geo-certification Habitat management	£20,000
<b>Skerr Farm</b>	Drystone walling & fencing Path work	£39,100
<b>Porthcawl Seafront</b>	Stabilise dunes to maintain disabled access	£6,000
<b>Merthyr Mawr</b>	Site surveys Boundary work ROW improvements Dune & habitat management	£77,000

<b>Collaboration Administration</b>	Formalisation of collaboration Marketing & communication PPE Training Monitoring and evaluation	£37,500
<b>Collaboration Co-ordination</b>	BCBC staff time management of project and grant claim	£52,941
	<b>Total Project Costs</b>	£312,541

## 8. Recommendation.

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 8.1 Delegate authority to the Corporate Director – Communities, to further develop the detail of the project as outlined above in partnership with local, regional and national stakeholders and submit, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the full application and accept any resulting funding offer.
- 8.2 Delegate authority to the Corporate Director – Communities upon receipt of any resulting funding offer to put in place the required legal and management agreements in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services.

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**25 July 2017**

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### **Background Documents**

None