

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

19 JANUARY 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

VALLEYS REGIONAL PARK, BRYNGARW COUNTRY PARK DISCOVERY GATEWAY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on an opportunity to access further funding through the Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateways Capital Grant, 2019-2021, and to seek Cabinet approval to accept a revised funding offer and enter into agreement with delivery partner Awen Cultural Trust to support the delivery of activities as part of the Valleys Regional Park at Bryngarw Country Park.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1. This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-
1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Valleys Regional Park (VRP) has been developed through the Welsh Government Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys in partnership with the Valleys' local authorities (Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Neath Port Talbot), Natural Resources Wales, Visit Wales and Welsh Government policy colleagues in Health and Environment Divisions. It reflects the views of stakeholders from Valleys' communities, the Third Sector, Public Health Wales and feedback received through a series of engagement events held over 18 months. The VRP prospectus was published on 18th October 2018.

- 3.2 In 2018 Welsh Government announced a series of Valley Discovery Sites - Dare Valley Country Park (Rhondda Cynon Taff), Caerphilly Castle (Caerphilly), Cwmcarn Forest (Caerphilly), Blaenavon World Heritage Visitor Centre (Torfaen), Cyfarthfa Park (Merthyr Tydfil), Ynysangharad War Memorial Park (Rhondda Cynon Taff) , Parc Bryn Bach (Blaenau Gwent CBC), Parc Slip Nature Reserve and Bryngarw Country Park (both Bridgend).
- 3.3 In April 2019 Welsh Government invited proposals for funding for Discovery Sites. All sites were invited to submit proposals direct to Welsh Government for capital funding, outlining options for delivery against the ambition of the VRP prospectus. Officers from Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) worked with officers from Awen Cultural Trust to finalise and submit proposals for Bryngarw Country Park.
- 3.4 In September 2019, BCBC accepted a grant offer of £500,000 for the delivery of activity at Bryngarw Country Park through the Valleys Regional Park Discovery Sites Capital Grant, 2019-2021.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1. After accepting the funding offer in relation to the proposal for Bryngarw Country Park, BCBC entered into a legal agreement with Awen Cultural Trust who have subsequently undertaken activities as outlined and agreed with Welsh Government.
- 4.2 In December 2020 BCBC was approached by Awen Cultural Trust with a range of actions which would be in addition to existed agreed actions and potentially require further funding which Welsh Government had indicated may be available.
- 4.3 The proposed actions in addition to what has already been agreed are:
- Solar panels (Phase 2) – by extending the initial VRP-funded project to cover other buildings on the Bryngarw site the aim is to generate a very substantial proportion of the estate’s daytime electricity consumption. As well as making the Park more sustainable by reducing electricity bills, the full project would be a visible example of green energy in action and would reduce its carbon footprint.
 - Boardwalk (Phase 2) – VRP funding in 2020-21 is enabling Awen Cultural Trust to upgrade part of the boardwalk in the ‘wet woodland’ area of the park, helping it to reopen and interpret this environmentally important habitat to our visitors. A further section of boardwalk improvements could be delivered with additional funds.
 - Toilets improvements – a major strand of the VRP funding in 2020-21 is the project to make the visitor centre a genuine destination for visitors, where they can engage with the natural history of Bryngarw and the wider Garw Valley. Improvements to the adjoining toilet block

which would benefit from external and internal improvements, could be supported with additional funds.

- Car park improvements –further improvements could be made to the infrastructure in and around the car park to ensure that its safety is improved further and it becomes more welcoming for visitors.
- Sculptural heritage trail –a potential scheme that would encourage visitors to explore the expanse of the country park, discover different habitats and connect with heritage and modern day stories.

4.4 These proposed actions have subsequently been agreed by Welsh Government and an opportunity now exists for BCBC to access a further £147,000 in 2020-21 to support their delivery in partnership with Awen Cultural Trust.

4.5 In order to access this additional funding, it is proposed that BCBC will continue to act as the grant recipient and enter into a revised grant agreement with Welsh Government. Awen Cultural Trust as delivery partner will be invited to enter into appropriate revised agreements with BCBC.

4.8 BCBC will require a revised funding agreement with Awen Cultural Trust. That funding agreement shall mirror the requirements of the revised Welsh Government grant agreement and will pass on the obligations contained therein and hold the grant recipient liable for any breach of the terms of the grant funding agreement caused by their default. This will be developed by BCBC legal department in line with required policies and procedures and to ensure that the grant of funding to Awen Cultural Trust is made on a State aid compliant basis.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1. There is no direct impact on the Council's policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1. It is considered that there will be no negative impacts from this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment Template has been completed and a summary of the implications from the assessment relating to the five ways of working is below:

- Long-term: The activities that form part of the scheme have been identified by the partner, Awen Cultural Trust, that will take part and are closely aligned with the long-term ambitions set out in the VRP prospectus. A regional collaborative approach with other Discovery sites works towards long-term delivery.

- Prevention: On their own none of the partners or participating Discovery sites would be able to achieve the scale of impact that such a partnership approach offers. Therefore delivering in this way offers the opportunity to build on success to date and prevent a deterioration of the value of this site.
- Integration: The scheme will achieve this way of working by recognising the approaches that are proposed for support are those that have been identified by a partner organisation due to their synergy with local, regional and national priorities.
- Collaboration: The proposals have been developed and will be delivered through a strong partnership between BCBC and Awen Cultural Trust.
- Involvement: The scheme will be delivered in close partnership with a range of local stakeholders.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. Welsh Government originally awarded £500,000 for delivery of the proposal at Bryngarw Country Park to be delivered over 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.
- 8.2 The opportunity now exists to access a further £147,000 WG grant for additional action at Bryngarw Country Park to enhance the budget available to a total of £647,000 in 2020-21.
- 8.3 There is no match funding requirements for BCBC as a result of this additional funding.
- 8.4 Welsh Government have indicated that the additional funding is fixed and there is no scope to vire into future financial years. Awen Cultural Trust have confirmed that they will manage and spend the resources in line with this and will be liable for any costs resulting from over or under spend not in line with the profile and not agreed by Welsh Government and BCBC.
- 8.5 The Section 151 Officer will ensure that the grant funding provided is used solely for the purposes outlined in the grant offer letter. Expenditure of the grant will comply with all statutory requirements for accounting and internal audit (including supporting records and all systems of internal checks and control), and will be included with any internal or external audit of the Council's funding.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1. It is recommend that Cabinet:-
 - Accept the additional funding and revised grant offer for the delivery of activity at Bryngarw Country Park of £647,000 through the Valleys Regional Park Discovery Sites Capital Grant, 2019-2021.
 - Authorise the Corporate Director, Communities, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Head of Legal and Regulatory Services, to enter

into a revised agreement for delivery of the above and any subsequent minor amendments with Welsh Government and Awen Cultural Trust.

Janine Nightingale
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Background documents:

- Valleys Regional Park Prospectus
- Cabinet report, Valleys Regional Park – Award of funding in relation to the Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateways Capital Grant 2019 - 2021, 17th September 2019.