



Report of the Cabinet Member for Delivery and Operations

Cabinet - 17 September 2020

Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places 2020-2021

Purpose:	To seek approval from Cabinet to accept a 100% grant from Welsh Government for specified projects totalling £135,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 5.7.
Policy Framework:	<p>The purpose of the funding is to support the following projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clyne Valley Country Park Regeneration• Decarbonising Countryside Management• Bishopswood Sustainable Drainage & Access <p>The projects were identified under the WG “Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places” scheme, in partnership with Gower AONB. The projects will support policies within the LDP, along with other CCS plans and policies.</p>
Consultation:	Local Members, Access to Services, Finance, Legal
Recommendation(s):	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Approval is given to accept a 100% grant of £135,000 from Welsh Government, to enable the projects to be developed and delivered within 2020/21.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Welsh Government, through its “Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places” programme (which is only open to Welsh AONBs), have made a grant offer of 100% funding towards three projects, based upon discussions with the Gower AONB Team. The funding totals £135,000, and is for 2020/21.

- 1.2 The projects all support, and contribute towards, the Welsh Governments “Valued and Resilient” priorities for the Welsh AONBs and National Parks, as well as Council policies contained within the LDP, and other plans and policies. The projects support and contribute towards the provision of local access to green space, and sustainability.
- 1.3 The projects will be coordinated by the AONB Team, with work carried out by Countryside Access and Nature Conservation Teams. Other Council teams have been involved, and officers intend to continue and expand this to include wider stakeholders, in drawing up detailed specifications and work plans.
- 1.4 Following advice from Democratic Services and Legal Services, the NGA2 process has been used to approve the acceptance of the funding offered, within a reasonable timescale. Due to the Cabinet meeting schedule, retrospective approval is being sought for the funding.

2. Project outlines

- 2.1 **Clyne Valley Country Park Regeneration (£100,000)** is a proposal to stimulate regeneration and a sustainable future for Clyne Valley Country Park.
- 2.2 The Country Park - on the eastern fringe of Swansea - is one of the largest contiguous areas of land in the stewardship of Swansea Council (over 300ha). Clyne Valley has multiple special features and assets (historical and ecological), and is an area easily accessible to much of the city’s population. A number of visitor attractions and assets operate adjacent to the Country Park, including Blackpill Lido, Clyne Gardens, the Railway Inn and Clyne Farm Centre.
- 2.3 Capital works and improvements are required to the network of footpaths and bridleways, including the installation of new and replacement bridge structures. Heritage and biodiversity assets require restoration, protection and interpretation measures. Other visitor assets – particularly carparks at Blackpill, Upper Killay and Mill Lane – need improvement. Development/feasibility work is needed to assess the potential for associated tourism-related development in and around the Country Park and linkages with the Railway Inn, Blackpill Lido etc.
- 2.4 This project will make improvements and additions to the permissive route network to enable better visitor access to, and within, the Country Park. Car parking and public realm improvements will improve its appeal to local visitors and tourists, and improve business opportunities for nearby businesses.

- 2.5 **Decarbonising Countryside Management (£5,000)** - The project will reduce use of two-stroke petrol, reducing the Countryside Sections carbon footprint as an exemplar of adaptation of services, in recognition of the Climate Change Emergency. Moving to electric versions of chainsaws, trimmers and brushcutters will enable better, cleaner and quieter working – supporting better access to countryside and green space in Gower AONB. Swansea Council manages more than 400 miles of Rights of Way on Gower, along with three Local Nature Reserves and other sites. These capital purchases will reduce carbon emissions from countryside management and deliver revenue savings by improving work efficiency.
- 2.6 **Bishopswood Sustainable Drainage & Access (£30,000)** - This is a proposal to provide a sustainable drainage solution and surfacing for the key access route to Bishop's Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Bishop's Wood is situated immediately north of Caswell Bay – one of Gower's four Blue Flag beaches. The LNR is part of the Gower Ashwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and very well used by visitors to Caswell Bay. The LNR is the main site used by Swansea Council for on-site environmental education.
- 2.7 The main access route into the LNR is from Caswell Bay car park northward along the valley floor. The porous limestone geology of the valley presents drainage problems – during periods of heavy rainfall, high volumes of water issue from various points and drain down the access route. Surface and sub-base material is washed away from the path, needing remediation works on a regular basis. This situation means that access into the LNR is not suitable to wheelchair users or others with limited mobility. The proposed works would include the investigation, design and implementation of a sustainable drainage and surfacing solution to the path. The surface will be suitable for all users and will minimise future maintenance requirements.

3. Legal Implications

- 3.1 The Council must comply with the terms and conditions attached to the offer of grant funding and must ensure that any procurement of goods, works or services complies with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4. Equality and Engagement Implications

- 4.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

- 4.2 An EIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that the acceptance of the offer of Welsh Government funding does not require a full EIA report. The individual projects will be subject to individual EIA screening, once more details are available. The Welsh Government offer is specifically for these projects, which are fundamentally to address existing maintenance and safety issues. In developing the projects, the increased provision of access and the removal of barriers will be a fundamental consideration. The recognition of “least restrictive option” approaches is fundamental to the work of the Teams involved, leading to the provision of “all-ability access” wherever possible. Our approach will ensure that consultation takes place at the most appropriate stage.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Authority already has responsibilities in these areas, and this offer of funding will assist the Council in achieving its ambitions as set out in a number of plans and policies (for example the LDP, the Gower AONB Management Plan, and draft Green Infrastructure Strategy). The funding has been offered at 100%, and is expected to cover the costs of the projects.

Background Papers:

NGA2

SLSP Grant Offer Letter 2020/21

EIA Scoping Report

Appendices:

None