



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

DESIGNATION AS A COUNTRY PARK OF LAND AT CLYDACH VALE, TONYPANDY CURRENTLY KNOWN AS CWM CLYDACH COUNTRYSIDE PARK

21ST SEPTEMBER 2021

A REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ESTATES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES, COUNCILLOR MARK NORRIS AND THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE AND HERITAGE SERVICES, COUNCILLOR ANN CRIMMINGS.

Authors: Kelly Daniel, Estates Surveyor: Acquisition and Disposals, Corporate Estates and Michelle Gibbs, Facility Development Manager, Leisure and Parks.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek authority to designate land currently known as Cwm Clydach Countryside Park at Clydach Vale, Tonypandy (within the Rhondda Fawr Valley) as a Country Park in accordance with the provisions of the Countryside Act 1968.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the designation of an area of land currently known as Cwm Clydach Countryside Park, measuring approximately 67.2 ha / 166 acres at Clydach Vale, Tonypandy as 'Cwm Clydach Country Park' in accordance with the provisions of the Countryside Act 1968.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The designation of the land will provide the County Borough with a new Country Park within the Rhondda Valley which will complement the existing Dare Valley Country Park in the Cynon Valley.

- 3.2 The Country Park designation will allow the Council to erect Tourist Destination signs, which are brown in colour, to identify the area's specific status and promote the area to visitors. The Tourism Service would promote the location as part of a wider offer to visitors of the park, which will contribute to the 'outdoor activity' theme specified within the Council's Tourism Strategy.
- 3.3 The designation of the land as a Country Park will allow the Council and partners to apply for external grant funding to enhance opportunities for residents and visitors and which will have a direct improvement on health and wellbeing of people using the Country Park.
- 3.4 The Council has developed a working partnership with both Friends of Cwm Clydach Country Park and Cambrian Village Trust (CVT) in relation to the future developments of the land both at the proposed county park site and the new 3G sports pitch in Clydach Vale. The designation will support both organisations that work in partnership with the Council to further enhance and develop the land for both residents and visitors.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The land currently known as Cwm Clydach Countryside Park is identified in Appendix 1 of this report and comprises the area outlined in red on the map.
- 4.2 The Park is located on the site of the old Cambrian colliery, an area of outstanding natural beauty. There are two lakes located on the site known locally as "top lake" and "bottom lake", along with a number of small waterfalls. Located to the East of the lakes is the Cambrian Lakeside Café Bar with recently resurfaced free public car parking area.
- 4.3 The land was reclaimed by the Welsh Development Agency, now Welsh Government in 1984 after the land was acquired by the Authority from the National Coal Board and Coal Industries Ltd. Part of that whole area has been redeveloped to provide commercial and industrial accommodation including the County Borough Council's civic centre and ancillary office accommodation. These areas of the land will be excluded from any country park designation and are shown outside the red line area on the map.
- 4.4 The land shaded green on the plan in Appendix 1 is part of the Healthy Hillside Project currently being managed by Countryside Section. The project is a multi-agency partnership focussed on providing land management solutions to reduce grass fires in South Wales delivering multiple environmental benefits. The land at Clydach Vale is one of the project sites identified for development of a long-term conservation grazing project to test the sustainability of using grazing to deliver grass fire prevention. Existing Project Staff will continue to take forward the co-ordination and delivery of the work.

- 4.5 A Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) has been designated on much of the undeveloped land which comprises well-established woodlands and vegetation consistent with the use of the land for leisure purposes.

5. CURRENT STATUS OF THE LAND

- 5.1 The Council's property legal team completed an examination of the Council's title deeds for the land (report on title) shown edged red in Appendix 1, on the 14th January 2021, the findings of such are as follows:
- 5.2 The land comprises of several registered titles, most of which are registered at the HM Land Registry to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council under the class of absolute freehold title, with the exception of one parcel of land where the class of title is possessory title to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. Subject to the decision on the designation of the Country Park, it is proposed that the Council make an application to Land Registry to upgrade this parcel to title absolute. Absolute freehold title is the best class of title available.
- 5.3 The land is subject to various rights and covenants, including restrictions in respect of developments in certain areas where mine shafts are located. Any planned developments will need to satisfy any conditions and adhere to any restrictions contained in the deed for that parcel of land.
- 5.4 There are various agreements on the land including historic grazing licences and allotment agreements. The designation of the area as a Country Park would have no adverse impact on these licences and agreements.
- 5.5 The Lakeside café and adjacent car park are leased to the 'Trustees of Cambrian Village' Trust and 'the Cambrian Village Trust', a registered charity, respectively. The designation of the area as a Country Park would have no adverse impact on these leases.
- 5.6 There is nothing apparent within the deed wallet restricting the land being designated as a Country Park.
- 5.7 The Countryside Act 1968 under which the designation is being made, does not authorise any development or change of use for which planning is required. Planning permission would only be required if there is a material change of use of the land.
- 5.8 The majority of the land surrounding the Countryside park (outside of the site location plan outlined in red on the map) is registered under a HM Land Registry Title to the National Assembly for Wales. Any request to

further extend into land that is not within the ownership of the Council will need to be agreed by way of a Deed with the registered owner.

6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.1 The Council has developed a partnership with Cambrian Village Trust over a number of years. The organisation links with a range of Council departments including Leisure, Parks and Countryside, the RCT Together Community Development Team and Adult Services.
- 6.2 Cambrian Village Trust has successfully delivered a number of key large capital projects in the Park and surrounding areas, such as the development of the lakeside café and office accommodation, the FIFA accredited 3G pitch and in partnership with the Cwmclydach Community Development Trust, the hydropower scheme. Talks to deliver a new hydropower scheme are ongoing with other partners.
- 6.3 Friends of Cwm Clydach Country Park are working alongside Cambrian Village Trust to assist in the general maintenance of the area undertaking litter picks and carrying out repair works to fencing and paths. Both groups are also a partner in the Groundwork Well-being Project (Conservation Workshops) being delivered weekly at this site.
- 6.4 Cambrian Village Trust has developed a Strategic Board with the Council and other key partners such as 'RHA Wales' (Rhondda Housing Association), the Friends of Group and other local groups and organisations. Council representatives include Leisure, Parks and Countryside, Adult Services, Tourism, Heritage and Visitor Attractions, Prosperity and Development and the RCT Together Community Development Team.
- 6.5 The focus of the Board is to develop a vision and strategic plan for the proposed Country Park focusing on tourism, heritage biodiversity and physical activity. It will also identify key large scale capital projects for development in the future. This strategic plan will contribute to the Council's commitment to the climate change.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been completed for the proposal.
- 7.2 The proposed designation has no impact on the protected characteristics therefore a full assessment is not required at this time.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal.
- 8.2 This phase is for the designation of Country Park status therefore the proposal has neutral impact on the welsh language.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 There is no legal requirement set out in the Countryside Act 1968 to undertake a public consultation as part of the process to designate an area as a Country Park.
- 9.2 Initial consultation has been carried out with the local Councillor and local community interest groups, notably Cambrian Village Trust and Friends of Cwm Clydach Country Park regarding the proposed designation. All stakeholders were in support of the proposal outlined in this report.
- 9.3 Although wider community consultation on the proposed designation is not required at this stage, consultation on any future developments and projects will take place as required.
- 9.4 The Councils Tourism and Planning Services have been consulted and commented that the provision of an improved open green space would be beneficial to the health and wellbeing of both visitors and residents in the area.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 10.1 The designation of the land as a Country Park will enable the Council and recently established Strategic Board to apply for external funding to enhance and develop the site. This will be the primary mechanism to fund the development of the Country Park.
- 10.2 The initial designation of the Park will incur additional costs in respect of brown tourist signs, interpretation / directional signage and maintenance. An allocation of £50k has been set aside to support this work and will be managed from within existing resources.
- 10.3 Thereafter, as part of the on-going development of the Country Park, should proposals require additional resources, these will be subject to further reports for consideration / decision, as appropriate.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The Countryside Act 1968 provides that a local authority shall have power, on any site in the countryside appearing to them suitable or adaptable for

the powers set out in section 6(1), to provide a Country Park, that is to say a park or pleasure ground to be used for that purpose.

12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

12.1 This proposal directly supports the Council's 2020-2024 Corporate Plan – 'Making a Difference' where there is a commitment to Investing in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise.

12.2 Specifically, the designation of land at Clydach Vale as a Country Park will contribute to the Council's corporate priorities:

- Ensuring **People: *are independent, healthy and successful;***
- Creating **Places: *where people are proud to live, work and play;***
- Enabling **Prosperity: *creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.***

12.3 Future works, led by Cambrian Village Trust, in partnership with the Council and Friends of Cwm Clydach Country Park, will help develop a vision document and future plan for the park, linked in with corporate and national priorities.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 The report sets out a proposal to designate an area of reclaimed land as a Country Park, further promoting the area as a place for residents and tourists to visit and enjoy the countryside.

13.2 An increase in visitors to the Country Park and wider region will assist to increase footfall in local towns boosting the local economy.

13.3 The increased footfall to the Country Park and continued delivery of outdoor activities and education opportunities, will help support the health and wellbeing of both local residents and park visitors.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Public Services Delivery, Communities and Prosperity

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers

None

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Appendix 1 - Site location plan:

