

SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF LAND AT FORMER IRONWORKS AT CLYDACH GORGE FROM COSTAIN TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL

MEETING: FULL COUNCIL

DATE: 17TH JANUARY 2018

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Llanelly Hill

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council consent for the transfer of ownership from Costain to the Council, the land known as the former Cemex Cement Plant at Clydach Gorge, Clydach, near Abergavenny.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the former Cemex Site at Clydach Gorge (hatched blue on the attached plan) be transferred by Costain to Monmouthshire County Council for the sum of £1
- 2.2 That following transfer to County Council that site be incorporated into the portfolio of land and property managed and operated by the Council's Countryside Service

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The site measuring 0.45 hectares is hatched blue on the attached plan, it adjoins the Council's land holding known as Clydach Ironworks which is located to the SW of the site.
- 3.2 Access to the land already in the Council's ownership is currently restricted to a listed footbridge crossing the River Clydach from the western river bank and a steeply inclined footpath from Clydach village.
- 3.3 Clydach Ironworks was built in 1795 and closed in 1861. The ironworks were gifted to the former Blaenau Gwent BC in the 1980s and subsequently transferred to the Council's management. The ironworks, and the adjoining Cemex site, are designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and lie in the Brecon Beacons National Park at a strategic location in the Clydach Gorge and close to the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.
- 3.4 The Cemex site sits between the Ironworks and the visitor car park and picnic site on Station Road (see attached plan). These have been impacted by the A465 Heads of the Valley dualling scheme and the former caravan site and part of the picnic site are lost to the new construction works, however the remaining part of the picnic site and the car park will be returned to the Council once the works are completed.

- 3.5 The "Cemex" site has a history of light industrial uses, including as a concrete batching plant. The site was acquired as part of the A645 works originally to utilise for temporary construction works but this was not necessary and so the site has not been impacted by any works providing the opportunity for a more beneficial future use.
- 3.6 Once the A465 dualling is completed the sites will sit in a prominent position next to the new Clydach South / Saleyard junction at the eastern gateway to the Clydach Gorge.
- 3.7 The benefits of the transfer are as follows:
- a. To provide operational access to the land already in the Council's ownership. Lack of vehicular access to the ironworks has compromised management and conservation works and is a significant constraint in developing future restoration proposals (the ironworks are currently in a poor condition). Whilst acquiring the site does add some additional liabilities in terms of an additional portion of the SAM this is only a small additional part of the scheduled structure and its acquisition will considerably simplify any future works.
 - b. Transfer will allow the implementation of a comprehensive improvement scheme to provide an important gateway for visitors and local residents to access the eastern end of the gorge and provide a gateway facility into the adjacent World Heritage Site. This would provide an improved car park / picnic area, an improved landscape setting for the ironworks, new direct visitor access, signage and visitor interpretation all to achieve a step change in the welcome and legibility of the site to visitors.
- 3.8 These proposals have been developed from a partnership approach to realising the opportunities presented by the road investment to enhance the visitor experience via the Clydach Gorge Enhancement Project and in turn build on the Clydach Gorge Gateway Development Study prepared in 2009 for Blaenau Gwent CBC, Monmouthshire CC and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority.
- 3.9 A detailed improvement scheme is currently under preparation and will be subject to future community consultation. This scheme is funded via Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS) grant from Welsh Government, via Visit Wales. These proposals have been delayed by the construction delays to the A465 dualling works and will be the subject of a future report, however at this stage further progression in their development and reprogramming the scheme is subject to agreement in principle to transfer the Cemex site.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Positives	Negatives	Recommendation
<i>Under the transfer of the land for £1 from Costain to MCC</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The transfer will enable the Council's Countryside service to better manage the land already in the Council's ownership to the SW of the subject land.</i> • <i>Transfer of the land will remove a significant constraint in developing future restoration proposals</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Expenditure required</i> • <i>Potential liability inherent with owning a former cement works (the proposed scheme does not involve any ground disturbance to minimise this liability)</i> • <i>Additional liabilities in</i> 	<i>To transfer the site as set out in the report</i>

	<p><i>for the ironworks (currently in a poor condition).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agreement in principle to transfer the Cemex site is necessary to progress the overall visitor gateway enhancement scheme and access the TAIS grant which will provide an enhanced visitor facility in a strategic location</i> 	<p><i>relation to the SAM (small in relation to the size of the existing structure and structural survey completed)</i></p>	
<p><i>Do not undertake the transfer</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No additional liabilities</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The ironworks remain difficult to access for management and significantly constrained adding costs and complexity to developing future restoration proposals</i> • <i>Fragmented landownership / poor visitor access</i> • <i>Will not be able to progress the gateway enhancement scheme as the TAIS grant is conditional on securing the Cemex site</i> 	

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 5.1 An evaluation assessment has been included at Appendix A for future evaluation of whether the decision has been successfully implemented. The decision will come back to this committee in 12 months for review

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 To enable members to make a decision on the transfer of the Cemex site which is a necessary step to further progression the development and reprogramming of the proposed Clydach gateway enhancement scheme as set out above.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The gateway enhancement scheme is funded via Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS) grant of £128,000 from Welsh Government, via Visit Wales, subject to reprogramming the scheme and finalising the match funding (a combination of partnership and section 106 funding) which will be the subject of a further report once the scheme's development has progressed. The enhancement scheme includes a future management plan and will simplify the site's overall management (including the transfer land), which can

be met from existing budgets. Transfer and valuation costs will be met from the approved TAIS grant

8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 8.1 The significant equality impacts identified in the assessment (Appendix 1) are summarised below for members' consideration: The positive benefits of the transfer of the land is intended to facilitate the short term enhancement scheme, future site management and improve the circumstances for a longer term restoration scheme for the ironworks itself to the benefit of the local community, local environment and the wider economy through destination development.
- 8.2 The actual impacts from this report's recommendations will be reviewed in 12 months and criteria for monitoring and review will include: progress on transfer of the site and in achieving gateway enhancement scheme

9. CONSULTEES:

SLT
All Cabinet Members

Local Members - Cllr Simon Howarth, Cllr Jane Pratt
Mark Howcroft - Assistant Head of Finance
Mark Holley - Insurance Manager
Joanne Chase - Solicitor, Legal Services

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Future Generations Evaluation
Appended plans: Location Plan; Clydach Land Ownership
Land Registry Title and Plan

11. AUTHOR:

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Gareth King - Principal Estates Surveyor

12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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Evaluation Criteria – Cabinet, Individual Cabinet Member Decisions & Council

Title of Report:	TRANSFER OF LAND AT FORMER IRONWORKS AT CLYDACH GORGE FROM COSTAIN TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL
Date decision was made:	17TH JANUARY 2018
Report Author:	Colette Bosley - Principal Officer Landscape & Countryside Gareth King - Principal Estates Surveyor

What will happen as a result of this decision being approved by Cabinet or Council?

Agreement to transfer Cemex site to allow gateway enhancement scheme to progress

12 month appraisal

Was the desired outcome achieved? What has changed as a result of the decision? Have things improved overall as a result of the decision being taken?

What benchmarks and/or criteria will you use to determine whether the decision has been successfully implemented?

Transfer of site
Progress in achieving gateway enhancement scheme

12 month appraisal

Paint a picture of what has happened since the decision was implemented. Give an overview of how you fared against the criteria. What worked well, what didn't work well. The reasons why you might not have achieved the desired level of outcome. Detail the positive outcomes as a direct result of the decision. If something didn't work, why didn't it work and how has that effected implementation.

What is the estimate cost of implementing this decision or, if the decision is designed to save money, what is the proposed saving that the decision will achieve?

Net no additional site management costs

12 month appraisal

Give an overview of whether the decision was implemented within the budget set out in the report or whether the desired amount of savings was realised. If not, give a brief overview of the reasons why and what the actual costs/savings were.

Any other comments