

**SUBJECT: CLYDACH IRONWORKS ENHANCEMENT SCHEME
REVISION/S106 FUNDING, CAE MELDON**

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 2nd DECEMBER 2020

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Llanelly Hill

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To agree the re-allocation of funding towards the Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme and to update cabinet on the current position in the light of the delays to the A465 scheme and discussions with Welsh Government.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To formally withdraw the grant offer to Clydach Juniors Football Club from Section 106 balances and to re-allocate the sum of £53,000 to the Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme and associated works;
- 2.2 To note the variation on the current Clydach Ironworks Enhancement TAIS Scheme and the further investigations of the ironwork's condition and potential restoration;
- 2.3 To seek to secure further Welsh Government support for the enhancement of the former car park and picnic site through the A465 legacy proposals.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 The Council received Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS) grant from Welsh Government in 2017 to enhance the setting of the ironworks, car park and picnic site. As part of this scheme the Council has acquired the former Cemex site to consolidate land ownership of the monument and improve visitor and operational access.
- 3.3 Any progress on the scheme has been hampered by the impact of the delays to the A465 scheme and consequent delays in the handing back of the car park and remaining part of the picnic site, currently in Welsh Government's control as part of the road scheme. In the last few months it became clear that the Council would not be able to reoccupy the car park and picnic site in the current financial year, rendering the approved scheme impossible to deliver by the fixed grant deadline of March 2021.

- 3.4 As a result a variation has been approved to the TAIS scheme to undertake enhancement works on the “Cemex” and ironworks sites, with some additional works to improve linkages on the public footpath to the community hall. Efforts are now underway to maximise delivery of the scheme in this financial year.
- 3.5 Whilst this approach will maximise use of the current grant it leaves the car park and picnic site potentially unimproved. The terms of the CPO require the site to be handed back in its original condition. Ongoing discussion with Welsh Government have indicated their support in principle for enhancement over this standard via the A465 legacy funding, subject to final agreement on the legacy priorities. The timescale for any works is unclear but would take place after the end of the current road contract.
- 3.6 Welsh Government have supported the wider project to date by providing access to professional services and liaison is ongoing with regard to assistance on both the ironworks/Cemex scheme and to redesign the “legacy” scheme on the car park.
- 3.7 Beyond the enhancement scheme the monument itself remains in poor condition. It has been identified by Cadw to be at ‘high’ risk and a ‘high’ level of vulnerability. In the short term discussion are underway with Cadw to extend the current works to undertake some vegetation clearance alongside a further structural survey. It is hoped this information will lead to further consideration of the longer term options / funding for restoration. However it is clear that the scale of intervention required and the long term management implications would require this to be based around a new partnership approach.
- 3.8 Cabinet has previously agreed the use of the unallocated balance of £23,020 from the Cae Meldon development in Gilwern, under capital budget code 98881 to be used to part fund the Clydach Ironworks Improvement Scheme. There are also two projects that were offered grants from the S106 proceeds from the Cae Meldon development that remain unspent, one of which is a grant offer to Clydach Juniors Football Club.
- 3.9 In September 2017 the council made a S106 grant offer of £53,000 to Clydach Juniors Football Club for the provision of two additional junior football pitches in the local area. The club has been (and still is) unable to progress that project because the land involved forms part of the A465 Head of the Valleys duelling work and there is no prospect of the land being released in the foreseeable future. The club has been contacted and has acknowledged its inability to proceed with the original scheme for playing pitch provision. Against this background, and to ensure that the available funding is utilised within the “spend by” date specified in the S106 Agreement of May 2022, it is proposed to withdraw the grant offer and re-allocate it to the Ironworks project.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 The equality impacts identified in the assessment (Appendix 1) are summarised below for members’ consideration: The proposals are intended to facilitate the short term enhancement scheme, future site management and assessment to 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.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Positives	Negatives
<i>To agree the allocation of further s106 money</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Allows the enhancement scheme to proceed as planned and to develop the option to extend the scheme to include vegetation removal and assessment of the monument</i> • <i>Supports further progress on future funding / options for the ironworks and the future enhancement of the car park / picnic site</i> • <i>Meets the s106 spend date</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Restricts funding to be available for other projects</i>
<i>To not agree the allocation of further s106 money</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Allows the funding to be available for other projects provided they can be completed by the spend date</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The enhancement scheme will be restricted due to the need for match funding (TAIS grant at 80%), in particular no option to extend the scheme to include vegetation removal and assessment of the monument</i> • <i>Lack of assessment of the monument will negate further progress on future funding / options for the ironworks</i>

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 Progress in delivery of the current scheme and success in achieving further progress to secure the enhancement of the car park and picnic area and the longer term condition of the monument.

7. REASONS:

7.1 To ensure that funding is available in the capital budget to enable the enhancement scheme to be progressed the current financial year.

7.2 To ensure the Section 106 funding received from the developers is used effectively to enhance community recreation provision in the Clydach area.

7.3 To seek to secure further enhancement to this important scheduled ancient monument and key visitor gateway.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 The gateway enhancement scheme is funded via Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS) grant of £128,000 (80%) from Welsh Government, via Visit Wales. Section 106 match funding of £23,020 has previously been approved. The additional section 106 allocation proposed of £53,000 will remove the pressure to fund the existing shortfall from the countryside site management budget, allow match funding for a further grant application to support the vegetation removal and survey, and allow progress on further

scheme design for the car park / picnic site. The costs of any future “legacy” scheme are unknown at present and will be the subject of a further report as required.

9. CONSULTEES:

Cabinet, SLT, Chief Operating Officer MonLife

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Equality and Future Generations Evaluation

- Previous Cabinet and Council reports:
 - Council 17th January 2018: Transfer of land at former ironworks at Clydach Gorge from Costain to the County Council
 - Cabinet 4th September 2019: Countryside sites s106 contributions
- S106 Agreement dated 2nd October 2014 between Brecon Beacons National Park, MCC, three private individuals, Persimmon Homes Ltd and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water relating to land at Cae Meldon Gilwern

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