

SUBJECT: CLYDACH IRONWORKS ENHANCEMENT SCHEME LAND TRANSFERS

MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member – Councillor S. Burch

DATE: 11 January 2023

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Llanelly Hill

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek approval for the transfer of land associated with the Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That two parcels of land adjacent to Clydach Ironworks (hatched in blue and orange on the attached plan) be transferred from Llanelly Community Council and a private owner for nominal sums to the Council.
- 2.2 That following transfer to the County Council the parcels be incorporated into the portfolio of land and property managed and operated by MonLife's Countryside Access Service

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 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 are 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. The monument has been identified by Cadw to be at 'high' risk and a 'high' level of vulnerability.
- 3.2 The Clydach Gorge Gateway Development Study prepared in 2009 for Blaenau Gwent CBC, Monmouthshire CC and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority identified the opportunities associated with the road investment to enhance the visitor experience, including developing a visitor hub at Clydach Ironworks to enable visitor access to the monument and to the wider countryside access network in the gorge.
- 3.3 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 acquired the former Cemex site to consolidate land ownership of the monument and improve visitor and operational access.

- 3.4 Progress on the scheme has been hampered by the impact of the delays to the A465 scheme. However the landscape and access improvement works at the Ironworks are complete and the car park and remaining part of the picnic site occupied as part of the road construction have, after seven years, been very recently returned to the Council's management. The site now benefits from prominent visitor signage on the A465.
- 3.5 With grant support from Cadw structural assessments and a first phase of essential works on the monument were completed in 2021. These temporary works have addressed critical defects at risk of collapse. In partnership with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority additional funding has been secured from the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI), with further support from Cadw, which will allow permanent repairs to these defects to be undertaken in 22/23.
- 3.6 Welsh Government have offered in principle further funding to support additional enhancements of the ironworks site, the returned car park / picnic site, and countryside access network improvements. Confirmation of a project submission is expected imminently, and it is hoped to develop and consult on detailed proposals and complete these in the 22/23.

Key Issues

- 3.7 As part of the enhancement scheme a new safety fence has been installed at the higher side of the monument, in part running alongside the existing Clydach village hall / playing field boundary. To enclose the scheduled structure, the associated fall risks, and to enable its construction the fence line has by agreement enclosed a strip of land in the ownership of Llanelly Community Council. It has been mutually agreed that for ease of future management the new fence line should form the ownership boundary necessitating a transfer of the enclosed land (hatched in blue on the attached plan). The proposed transfer will bring all of the top of the monument into the Council's ownership making future access and maintenance easier (the current line is indeterminate on the ground crossing parts of the structure) and ensure public safety.
- 3.8 Land running to the south west of the Ironworks, including a narrow strip of riverbank and part of the scheduled monument is in private ownership (hatched orange on the attached plan). The private owner has indicated their wish to transfer ownership at no cost to the Council. This is on balance an advantageous and timely offer. The land includes the incline footpath (a public right of way), riverside abutments to the main site and an area of woodland. Its acquisition will consolidate the Council's ownership making the monument easier to access and address the risks to the wider site associated with any deterioration of the riverside abutments. Recent structural surveys of the riverside structures have established they are generally in fair condition except for one part of the retaining wall. Options to remedy this have been identified and would be most economically carried out in the next phase of works when funding is available.
- 3.9 The proposed land transfers will further consolidate ownership, bringing all of the extant structures of the scheduled monument into the Council's ownership, and protect the current and planned investment in the site.
- 3.10 Despite this investment it is clear that the scale of intervention required to fully restore the monument, to address its long term management implications, and to realise the full

benefits of the site as a visitor attraction are potentially beyond the Council's ability to deliver and would require this to be based new partnership or management approaches. The proposed land transfers protect the ability to consider future options.

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 future site management and protect current /planned investment and longer term management options 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 proposed land transfers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Simplifies site and scheduled monument management and addresses maintaining public access and safety</i> <i>Supports progress on planned enhancements and protects existing investment / future funding and management options</i> <i>Timely in respect of current funding availability to address asset issues</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Adds additional assets</i> <i>Known issue on riverside wall</i>
<i>To not agree the proposed land transfers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Does not add to current assets</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Complicates future site and scheduled monument management</i> <i>Maintains risks to current and planned investment, including in the case of the privately owned land the intentions of any future owners</i> <i>Complexity of land ownership may negate further progress on future funding / management options for the ironworks</i>

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 Progress in delivery of the proposed transfers and success in achieving further progress to secure the enhancement of the site and the longer-term condition of the monument.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 To seek to meet the Council's obligation as an owner of a scheduled ancient monument, to contribute to local amenity and destination development and to maximise the potential for future external investment and management options.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 In each case transfer for a nominal sum is proposed with the Council meeting legal costs. There are no implications arising from the transfer of the Community Council land as the

necessary works have already been completed. The implications arising from the transfer of the privately owned land are potentially two-fold, works to the riverside retaining wall and additional woodland management costs. Structural and tree surveys have been completed. Options for the riverside wall will be most economically carried out as part of the wider contract addressing the essential works elsewhere on the monument and would be procured as part of the proposed scheme. A recent tree survey for the whole site has identified only a modest additional requirement resulting from the additional woodland, which will be addressed as part of the wider scheme. The overall site remains smaller than prior to the CPO associated with the A465 scheme. Slippage of £37,648 of the established capital project was approved into 22/23. In addition LEI grant of £213,677 is approved, with match of £40,000 agreed from Cadw. Further Welsh Government grant of £250,000 is approved in principle, with agreement of the submitted project outline expected imminently

9. CONSULTEES:

Ward Members
Cabinet
Senior Leadership Team
Chief Operating Officer MonLife
Estates Development Manager

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Plan
Appendix 2: Equality and Future Generations Evaluation

- Previous Cabinet and Council reports:
 - Council 17 January 2018: Transfer of land at former ironworks at Clydach Gorge from Costain to the County Council
 - Cabinet 4 September 2019: Countryside sites s106 contributions
 - Cabinet 2 December 2020: Clydach ironworks enhancement scheme revisions/106 funding, Cae Meldon

11. AUTHOR:

Matthew Lewis, Environment and Culture Manager, MonLife

12. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644855
E-mail: matthewlewis@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Plan

