

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

16.12.19

### VALLEYS REGIONAL PARK PARTICIPATION AND LEGAL AGREEMENT

#### Recommendations / key decisions required:

- To endorse the County Council's participation within the Valleys Regional Park
- To endorse the legal agreement appended to this report and authorise the Head of Administration and Law to sign and seal the document
- To endorse representation by the Council Leader on the Valleys Regional Park Board

#### Reasons:

To confirm Carmarthenshire's participation in the Valleys Regional Park initiative, working collaboratively to deliver benefits to the region, particularly Amman and Gwendraeth Valleys.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted NA

Exec Board Decision Required YES

Council Decision Required NO

#### EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Cllr Emlyn Dole

Directorate Chief Executive's	Designations:	Tel Nos.
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Stuart Walters	Economic Development Manager	

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**16.12.19**

**VALLEYS REGIONAL PARK– PARTICIPATION AND LEGAL AGREEMENT**

**Background**

**1. Valleys Taskforce**

The Amman and Gwendraeth Valleys have recently been included in the Welsh Government's Valleys Taskforce area covering the South Wales Valleys. The Taskforce was set up in 2017, following extensive engagement with people living and working in the Valleys. Our Valleys, Our Future, the taskforce's high-level plan was published in July 2017. At that stage The Amman and Gwendraeth Valleys were not included within the Taskforce area. The then participating authorities, together with private and third sector have been delivering elements of the high level plan, an update of which is contained in a report published by Welsh Government in October 2019.

The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport announced on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019, as part of a written statement update on the Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys, that the boundaries of the taskforce area would be extended to include the Gwendraeth and Amman Valleys. The statement indicated that the First Minister had agreed to widening the boundaries as these areas are very much culturally part of the South Wales Coalfield, with their distinctive heritage around anthracite mining, shared with the adjacent Valleys located to the east.

Meetings with Welsh Government officers have been held in recent months to understand the detail of what this extension means in terms of the areas covered and what will be delivered. The Council's Chief Executive was invited to be a member of the Taskforce Board going forward with the first meeting attended on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

The Welsh Government's Taskforce update report published early October 2019 indicates that the taskforce will continue to work to deliver all the actions included in Our Valleys, Our Future: Delivery Plan, but their efforts will focus in particular on 6 main priorities, one of which is the development of the **Valleys Regional Park** by 2021.

**2. The Valleys Regional Park**

The Valleys Regional Park (VRP) is focussed on maximising the social, economic and environmental potential of the valleys' natural and cultural heritage.

The VRP core team, responsible for co-ordinating the delivery of the project, will be employed through Bridgend CBC (funding having been made available from Welsh Government) and overseen by the VRP Board made up of the 13 partner local authorities' Leaders (Attended by CCC's Leader). The VRP Forum (attended by CCC Economic Development Manager) will be the delivery focused group made up of officers representing each of the partner local authorities as well as key stakeholders from other public sector organisations. In addition, they have sought representation from the private and third sectors.

A legal agreement for the VRP Project has been drafted for all participating Local Authorities to sign (appended to this report). The document is a collaboration agreement between the parties including obligations and therefore requires Executive Board approval to authorise the Head of Legal and Administration to sign and seal the document. In signing the document, the Partner Authorities agree that:

- they shall collaborate to undertake the Project by way of the Partnership Arrangements set out in Schedule 1 of the agreement;
- the VRP Board and VRP Forum shall be established in accordance with Schedule 2 of the agreement;
- they shall cooperate and share such operational information as is necessary for the smooth running of the Project.

The agreement effectively means that Carmarthenshire as a partner authority will indemnify the Lead Partner (Bridgend CBC) in respect of any non-compliance and/or breaches to those terms and conditions in the grant offer which are attributable to Carmarthenshire.

The purpose of the funding is to host the VRP project working in partnership with Welsh Government and the local authorities to develop the next stage of the VRP for the period to March 2021 and as set out in the VRP prospectus published in October 2018. While Carmarthenshire has been included within the initiative at a later stage, the legal agreement for all participating authorities has only recently been developed.

The VRP prospectus referred to above was developed through extensive engagement with Valleys communities and with key stakeholders including all of the Valleys local authorities and Natural Resources Wales. As Carmarthenshire has only recently been included within the VRP the authority will need to undertake appropriate consultation and feed back to the Lead Authority in order to inform the Prospectus going forward.

The project will run until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 with potential funding up to March 2023 and given Carmarthenshire's later inclusion it may appear a significant commitment for a relatively short timescale. However Welsh Government have stated that the purpose of the Partnership Arrangements at this stage is to develop the structures and partnership working for the Project with the intention of the Project being a longer term commitment.

The Council's legal department has scrutinised the document and amendments secured to ensure that the Authorities obligations are clear and achievable.

## Way Forward

Options that have been considered include:

a) Work collaboratively without legal agreement

While it would be possible to work collaboratively without a formal legal agreement its use is a pre-requisite of the funding awarded by Welsh Government with any future offer letters likely to specify that such an agreement must be drawn up and signed by all participating authorities prior to funding.

b) Decide not to sign the legal agreement and decline participation within the VRP

The Authority could decline signing the agreement and the opportunity to participate in the development VRP. VRP is, however seen as one of the key priorities of the Valleys Taskforce

and non-participation could undermine the Authority's position and standing in relation to the overall Valleys Taskforce delivery, particularly as the Authority has actively sought to include the Aman and Gwendraeth within the Valleys Taskforce. The benefits of participation can be monitored and the agreement does allow for a Partner Authority to terminate the agreement giving 12 months' notice.

c) Sign the legal agreement and participate within the VRP

Maximum benefits, in terms of WG funding, will be achieved through participation in the VRP and completing the legal Agreement Recommendation

**It is recommended that Executive Board:**

- **Endorses the County Council's participation within the Valleys Regional Park**
- **Authorises the Head of Administration and Law to sign and seal the legal agreement**
- **Endorses representation by the Council Leader on the Valleys Regional Park Board**

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	Legal Agreement
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### IMPLICATIONS

**I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:**

**Signed: Jason Jones Head of Regeneration**

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NONE</b>

**1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities**

The proposal supports the building blocks of Sustainable Development, Equalities, Welsh Language and Social Inclusion;

Participation in the VRP will be aligned with the County Council's own aspirations as set out in various Policy and Delivery documents including the Corporate Strategy, Digital Transformation Strategy, Moving Forward and the Transformations Plan.

The proposal will address each of the seven goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act as well as aligning to the five ways of working. The VRP prospectus includes actions to contribute to achieving the seven well-being goals. The proposal will result in extensive collaboration, consulting and involving communities, integrating areas of work as well as seeking to prevent problems through early intervention e.g. green social prescribing – balancing short and long term need, integrating actions, involving people, collaborating and early intervention to prevent problems arising.

## 2. Legal

The legal agreement includes obligations that indemnifies the lead authority from non-compliant actions undertaken by participating authorities i.e. Carmarthenshire. The legal agreement has been checked and amendments sought to ensure that the County Council is not compromised.

## 3. Finance

No direct financial implications at this stage however the legal agreement does require the County Council to comply with the terms and conditions of the Welsh Government's funding letter for the VRP. Non-compliance by Carmarthenshire could result in clawback. The Council will ensure that activity associated with VRP will be compliant going forward.

## 5. Risk Management Issues

Risk of clawback of any funding provided in future that is not compliant with relevant funding letters – Council to ensure that terms and conditions of any funding forthcoming in the future are met.

## 7. Staffing Implications

Participation involves staff resources.

## CONSULTATIONS

**I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below**

**Signed: Jason Jones Head of Regeneration**

**1. Scrutiny Committee** N/A

**2. Local Member(s)** Councillor is supportive through his involvement on VRP Board

**3. Community / Town Council** Not at this stage

**4. Relevant Partners** Not at this stage

**5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations** N/A

### Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

**THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW**

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Valleys Regional Park Legal Agreement		N/A
Our Valleys, Our Future		Welsh Government website
Valleys Regional Park prospectus		Welsh Government website