



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

5th February 2025

Joint Report of the Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage & Culture and Head of Property & Regeneration

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:

Sandfields East
Sandfields West

Report Title: Aberafan Seafront Masterplan

Purpose of the Report:

To provide Members with an update on the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan with a view to seeking approval to adopt the document to support the further regeneration of the area. To ensure robust governance arrangements for the management of future events and attractions on the seafront.

Executive Summary:

Developed through extensive research, consultation and public engagement the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan provides a framework for regeneration and development at Aberafan Seafront, bringing forward a range of projects that will further enhance the Seafront for the benefits of local residents and add to the visitor offer at this popular destination.

The Masterplan aims to enhance the quality and range of facilities, amenities and attractions available to the general public at Aberafan Seafront. It seeks to enhance the overall facilities for the benefit and wellbeing of the local community who, through the extensive consultation undertaken, have demonstrated a high level of pride in Aberafan Seafront.

The improved facilities and additional attractions will also attract higher spending visitor led markets and deliver a national and international profile for Neath Port Talbot, highlighting the area as a destination for events and holidays, boosting the local economy and paving the way to growing prosperity and sustainability.

The Aberafan Seafront Masterplan is presented to members with a view to providing a strategic framework for regeneration at the seafront.

Background:

In January 2023 Members approved five strategic 'anchor' projects to be funded by the NPT UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation. One of the four strands within the Place anchor project is The Aberafan Seafront Masterplan, with the desired outcome to provide a strategic narrative on which investment decisions can be made. This will avoid taking a fragmented approach to one of the County Borough's most important and high-profile assets.

A procurement exercise was undertaken and as a result Roberts Limbrick Ltd. were appointed as the consultant to lead on delivering the Seafront Masterplan. The commission was managed by the Property and Regeneration section, alongside the Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture department, both of whom collaborated closely with the consultants through the Masterplan development.

Consultation and Research

Developed through extensive research, consultation and public engagement this document has created a masterplan for the seafront.

In order to produce the Seafront Masterplan, detailed research and consultation has been undertaken via desk research, online and paper based public questionnaires (444 respondents in Wave 1 in February 2024 and 622 respondents in Wave 2 in November 2024), meetings with the Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economic Growth, meetings with local ward Members, one to one meetings with stakeholders as well as two waves of full face-to-face public consultation held at the Aberafan Leisure and Fitness Centre over two days which saw engagement with over 490 attendees in total.

The Masterplan document provides a steer for future investment and development at the seafront. Once a clear strategy for the area is in place it will encourage further investment in the overall offer which will result in job creation, further commercial opportunities and resultant increased visitor spend in the area. This, in turn will benefit existing businesses and help to secure the long-term future for the Seafront as a visitor destination, and an attractive asset to be used by residents of the county.

Implementation

The Aberafan Seafront Masterplan is intended as a live and evolving framework with the flexibility to respond to new pressures, opportunities, and proposals as they emerge during its lifespan. It is not designed to be a rigid or formal planning guidance.

The Masterplan aims to establish a quality seafront offer, protecting and enhancing our natural environment, celebrating the distinctive identity of our coastline, whilst promoting community use, wellbeing, sustainable inward investment, and tourism.

By putting people, their well-being, and the quality of their lives at its heart, we believe it will provide the foundation for building the renown and reputation our coastline deserves as part of the Dramatic Heart of Wales place brand and for the benefit of future generations of residents and visitors.

The future development of Aberafan Seafront can play a positive role in meeting the strategic objectives set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act for improving social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being in the seven wellbeing goals, with particular focus on sustainable development. The design and delivery of this framework will need to reflect a sustainable and responsible approach towards the development of the Seafront for the benefit of future generations

If the Seafront Strategy is adopted the next steps will be to identify the priority projects and activities alongside the strategic and local partnerships that are needed to help co-deliver. Some of these will be quick wins, trialling ideas, reviewing current service provision on the seafront as well as the short term, medium term and longer-term projects. The availability of funding will be a key contributory factor to the prioritisation process.

There was excellent engagement from local residents throughout the development process and strong agreement across the majority of proposals. However, the original proposals for a mixed use site for the Tir Morfa site in Sandfields West did cause significant debate with the consultation results clearly showing that respondents were unhappy with the proposal to add some housing to the site, even in a modest mixed use scheme. On the basis of the consultation results, the proposals have been modified to show the site as being leisure focussed.

Members should note the site is currently allocated for housing in the Local Development Plan (LDP) and therefore this proposal does not align with the policies in the existing adopted LDP. Moreover, given the fact that the LDP takes primacy in the planning decision making process, should any application come forward for residential

development in the meantime, subject to compliance with all relevant policies, any such proposal will likely receive planning approval given its allocation status in the LDP.

Members will also be aware that work is ongoing to prepare the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). At this juncture, there is no robust evidence available to support the view that a leisure scheme is deliverable/viable at the Tir Morfa site, and as such this will need further work in order to inform the new emerging RLDP.

Should the Council approve and publish the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan, the Tir Morfa site will not align with the adopted planning policy framework and will potentially have further implications for the Council in regard to being able to meet the identified housing need in the new RLDP.

Full details of the consultation, proposed projects, six seafront 'zones' and proposed next steps can be found in the document **Appendix 1: Aberafan Seafront Masterplan, November 2024.**

Events & Attractions

The strategy sets out an aspiration to create an events space, which will act as a versatile area to host events and attractions. Allied to this, officers will be bringing forward new Events Strategy in the near future, in which Aberafan Seafront will feature strongly. Having trialled a funfair in 2024 there is clearly demand from the public and operators for enhancing those opportunities going forward.

Financial Impacts:

The financial impacts of the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan will be assessed on a project-by-project basis as and when suitable external funding becomes available.

With better facilities and the potential for greater usage by residents and visitors it is hoped the overall financial impact will be very positive for the local area.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below.

The proposal is designed to introduce a masterplan which is aimed at attracting additional investment for the further regeneration of Aberafan Seafront. There are no anticipated negative impacts on individuals with any of the protected characteristics and the Masterplan will have a positive impact upon the meeting Wellbeing Objective 3 of the Council's Corporate Plan.

As project proposals are shaped further, funding secured and detailed design developed a further IIA assessment will be required for each scheme.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There are no impacts upon the Valleys Communities as a result of the proposed adoption of the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan.

Workforce Impacts:

There are no workforce impacts as a result of the proposed adoption of the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan.

Legal Impacts:

There are no legal impacts as a result of the proposed adoption of the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan.

Risk Management Impacts:

There are few risk management impacts as a result of the proposed adoption of the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan, mainly because this is a framework, and the risks will be mainly around the individual projects as they come forward.

The conflict however between the Local Development Plan status for the Tir Morfa site and the proposals being put forward within the Masterplan will need to be handled carefully and deliverability / viability proven for the Leisure proposal to stand a chance of being formally adopted as part of the Replacement Local Development Plan.

Crime and Disorder Impacts:

There are no crime and disorder impacts as a result of the proposed adoption of the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan.

Counter Terrorism Impacts:

There are no counter terrorism impacts as a result of the proposed adoption of the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts:

No impact.

Consultation:

Two waves of consultation have been undertaken with the local community, local members and Council Officers in relation to the proposals.

Consultation Wave 1 consisted of meetings with local Members, Cabinet Members and officers in addition to an online public questionnaire (444 respondents) and face to face drop-in sessions (attended by 236 people) held over two days at Aberafan Leisure and Fitness Centre on 16th and 17th February 2024. This wave of research focused on what improvements/ investments were needed on the Seafront in order to better cater for the needs of residents and visitors.

Consultation Wave 2 consisted of meetings with local Members, Cabinet Members and officers in addition to an online public questionnaire (622 respondents) and face to face drop-in sessions (attended by 254 people) held over two days at Aberafan Leisure and Fitness Centre on 18th and 19th October 2024. This wave of the

research focused on feedback on the draft proposals put forward for inclusion within the Masterplan.

Scrutiny update:

The Seafront Masterplan was presented to the Education, Skills and Wellbeing scrutiny panel on 22 January. Members received a brief overview of the strategy and asked questions around car parking, the exclusion of the land to the north of Princess Margaret Way, housing on the Tir Morfa site and funding for priority projects. A number of other points were made on the operational restrictions of the current site management and also the need for better transport links especially on peak summer days. Members approved the recommendations within the report and welcomed the masterplan as a significant step forward.

Recommendations:

With due regard to the accompanying Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form it is recommended that Members approve the Aberafan Seafront Masterplan as at Appendix 1.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure that the Council has a more cohesive, sustainable, and strategic approach to the future development of Aberafan Seafront as a leisure destination for the benefit of local community wellbeing and the local economy.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three-day call-in period.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Aberafan Seafront Masterplan

Appendix 2; Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

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