



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Personnel Committee

24th June 2019

Report of the Head of Planning Services

Nicola Pearce

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: *Glyncorwg, Cymmer and Gwynfi*

Lost Peatlands of South Wales Project – Creation of two full-time posts entitled ‘Lost Peatlands Project Manager’ and ‘Lost Peatlands Ecologist’

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval for the creation of two fixed term, full-time posts including ‘Lost Peatlands Project Manager’ and ‘Lost Peatlands Ecologist’, both of which will be based within the Countryside and Wildlife Team.

Executive Summary

- 2 Funding has been applied for from the ‘National Lottery Heritage Fund’ to deliver a cross-boundary and landscape scale partnership project that will restore upland habitats and provide significant community benefits.
- 3 Should the Council be successful in securing the funding, in order to deliver the project, and to secure second phase funding, we will need to act quickly to deliver the objectives of the grant. In order to do so we will require the employment of two new fixed term staff– a ‘Lost Peatlands Project Manager’ and a ‘Lost Peatlands Ecologist’.

- 4 Initially the posts will be for a fixed term of 1 year. Should continuity of funding be secured as part of the delivery phase however, there will be the potential to extend the contracts for a further 4 year fixed term.
- 5 Recruitment to the identified posts however will only commence following confirmation of the successful outcome of the funding bid and as a consequence, there will be no financial implications for the Council as staff costs will be fully grant funded.

Background

- 6 The Countryside and Wildlife Team, in partnership with Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, Natural Resources Wales, Swansea University and Coed Lleol have submitted a funding bid to the 'National Lottery Heritage Fund' to develop a cross-boundary landscape scale project.
- 7 The project will build on the Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm habitat management fund, used as match-funding, and will deliver the largest peatland restoration ever attempted in Wales on afforested land. The project will also deliver significant community benefits such as outdoor learning opportunities for local schools, health and well-being activities for communities, training and skills development, and improved access to the landscape.
- 8 The first year of the project is identified as a development phase, for which a funding bid of £434,751 has been submitted. The intention is to utilise part of this funding to facilitate two new fixed term Council posts to develop the project further, including applying for funding for the second phase of the project which is anticipated to amount to 4 years, which is estimated to bring the total project cost to £2,962,668.

Proposal

- 9 To create two fixed term full-time posts entitled 'Lost Peatlands Project Manager' and 'Lost Peatlands Ecologist'. Based within the Council's Countryside & Wildlife Team, both posts will be for an initial fixed term of 1 year. Should continuity of funding be secured as part of the delivery phase however, there will be the potential to extend the contracts for a further 4 year fixed term.

10 The Lost Peatlands Project Manager will:

- Oversee the delivery of the cross-boundary, grant funded project, focusing on the habitat restoration and management of upland habitats, and use of these and the wider forestry area as a community resource, wildlife habitat and visitor destination.
- Develop a strategy for the delivery of a landscape scale habitat restoration, community and school engagement, and professional training in the Pen y Cymoedd Upland area (Upper Afan Valley and Rhondda Fawr Valleys).
- Develop the project second phase funding bid for the full delivery of the project.

11 The Lost Peatlands Ecologist will:

- Lead on the ecological elements of the landscape scale habitat restoration of the project, including undertaking surveys, leading on restoration design and preparing management plans.
- Work with local groups, volunteers, local graziers and organisations in relation to species monitoring and habitat management.
- Undertake surveys to inform natural flood management.

12 Members should note that during the initial project discussions, use of contractors instead of employing staff was considered. This option however was considered to be more expensive and the skills and experience were deemed unlikely to be able to be secured easily through use of contractors.

13 The project is likely to have positive benefits for many services in the Council, including drainage and education.

Financial Impacts

14 Pending the successful outcome of the funding bid, there will be no financial implications for the Council. The Grade 8 salaries of both posts (£28,785) will be fully funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund Grant. All costs will therefore be accommodated within existing budgets.

Integrated Impact Assessment

- 15 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.
- 16 The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary of the first stage assessment is set out below:
- Staff will be employed to develop a project that is intended to be inclusive and make significant improvements to the environment of the Afan Valley as well as improve health and well-being. Staff will also be contributing to the restoration of peat bog and reinstating the carbon sequestration function of such habitat, this will contribute to decarbonisation and the Council's actions to tackle global warming. All impacts are considered to be positive and therefore no further assessment is needed.
 - The posts are grant funded so have no financial implications.
 - Biodiversity is considered by Welsh Government as an underpinning pillar of sustainable development. Improvements to biodiversity through the project, as developed by the staff, will contribute towards delivery of sustainable development.

Valleys Communities Impacts

- 17 The staff are to be employed to develop a project that focuses on delivering environmental improvements, provision of opportunities for community members to develop new skills, and health and well-being benefits for the communities of the Afan Valley. All impacts will be positive.

Workforce Impacts

- 18 Recruitment to the identified posts will only commence following the successful outcome of the grants process which will secure the necessary finance for the posts. The employment of new staff will be in line with the Council's recruitment and selection policies.

Legal Impacts

- 19 The new staff, through development of a project, will significantly contribute towards the Council's delivery of positive biodiversity conservation to meet the requirements of the biodiversity duty under the Environment Wales Act 2016 and in delivering the sustainable management of natural resources.

Risk Management Impacts

- 20 Pending the successful outcome of the funding bid, failure to employ new staff would result in the inability of the Council to meet the requirement of the grant offer and the partnership project would not be able to be delivered. The Council would not only lose the initial grant funding offer, but also the future opportunity to secure over £2 million from National Lottery Heritage Fund for full project delivery.

Consultation

- 21 There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

- 22 It is recommended that approval is granted for the establishment of a 'Lost Peatlands Project Manager' and Lost Peatlands Ecologist', both at Grade 8 and full time, based in the Countryside and Wildlife Team.

FOR DECISION

Reasons for Proposed Decision

- 23 To deliver the grant funded Lost Peatlands of South Wales Project and to develop a strategy for the second phase of funding.

Implementation of Decision

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

Appendices

- 25 Appendix 1 – Financial Appraisal
- 26 Appendix 2 – Impact Assessment First Stage

Officer Contact

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APPENDIX 1 – Financial Appraisal

SET UP COSTS

	Current Year
<u>Costs</u>	
Recruitment costs	
Accommodation costs	
Office costs	
IT	
Other (Specify)	
Total Set Up Costs	0
<u>Funding of Set Up Costs</u>	
Revenue budget	
Reserves	
Specific Grant	
Other (Specify)	
Total Funding of Set up costs	0

RECURRING COSTS

	Current Year	2020/21	Maximum cost
<u>Costs</u>			
	1/2 year	1/2 year	
Salary (see details next page)	39,539	41,581	
Employee Training			
Accommodation Running costs			
Travel & Subsistence (standby allowance)			
Other Running costs - office supplies			
Other Running costs - IT			
Total Recurring costs	39,539	41,581	0
<u>Funding of Recurring costs</u>			
<u>External sources</u>			
Specific Grant	39,539	41,581	
External Agencies			
Service Level agreement			
Other (Specify)			
<u>Internal sources</u>			
Existing budget Allocation			
Other (specify)			
Total Funding	39,539	41,581	0

Please refer to this table in the Financial Appraisal section of the report

Please note these posts are for one year only starting 1st September 2019

6 months 2019/20

6 months 2020/21

FINANCIAL APPRAISAL - SALARY DETAILS

POST	PROPOSED CHANGE	PAY GRADE		COST / (SAVING)		
	New Post/ Delete/ Regrade	Current	Proposed	Current Year	Full Year	Maximum
Lost Peatlands Project Manager	New Post	8		19,769.5	20,790.5	
Lost Peatlands Ecologist	New Post	8		19,769.5	20,790.5	
Total				39,539	41,581	

Please note these posts are for one year only starting 1st September 2019

6 months 2019/20

6 months 2020/21

APPENDIX 2: Impact Assessment – First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

Initiative Description/Summary: Employment of two new fixed term full-time staff to develop a cross-boundary partnership grant funded project
Service Area: Planning and Public Protection
Directorate: Environment

2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users	✓	
Staff	✓	
Wider community	✓	
Internal administrative process only		

3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.
Disability		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.
Gender Reassignment		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.
Pregnancy/Maternity		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.
Race		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.

Religion/Belief		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.
Sex		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.
Sexual orientation		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved.

4. Does the initiative impact on:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence used) / How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved. Project public communications will be bilingual.
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English		✓				HR Policies applied. Project will be inclusive aiming at encouraging all community members to be involved. Project public communications will be bilingual.

5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity	✓				H	Staff employed to deliver habitat restoration and management project –the largest peatland restoration in Wales on afforested peatlands. This will result in a significant enhancement in biodiversity, especially upland habitats and species.
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.	✓				H	Restoration of functioning upland ecosystems will reinstate their resilience ensuring wider benefit such as carbon sequestration, reduction in fire and flood risk.

6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):

	Yes	No	Details
Long term - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people	✓		Staff employed to develop a project that specifically includes measures to improve health and wellbeing of communities in the Afan Valley, including developing lasting legacy for measures.
Integration - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives	✓		Staff employed to develop a project that specifically includes measures to improve health and wellbeing of communities in the Afan Valley, including developing lasting legacy for measures.
Involvement - how people have been involved in developing the initiative	✓		Staff employed to develop a project and this project initial conception has involved members of a large number of organisations, community groups, schools have been involved in developing the project.
Collaboration - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions	✓		Staff employed to develop a project. Collaboration is at the heart of the project. Project is in partnership with Natural Resources Wales, Swansea University, RCTCBC and Coed Lleol. Project idea also discussed with other service areas such as tourism.
Prevention - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	✓		Staff employed to develop a project. Project aims to tackle various issues such as climate change, flood risk, fire risk, access issues, lack of skills in a community and health problems.

7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate):

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required	✓
Reasons for this conclusion	
<p>Staff will be employed to develop a project that is intended to be inclusive and make significant improvements to the environment of the Afan Valley as well as improve health and wellbeing. Staff will also be contributing to the restoration of peat bog and reinstating the carbon sequestration function of such habitat, this will contribute to decarbonisation and the Authorities actions to tackle global warming. All impacts are considered to be positive therefore no further assessment is needed.</p> <p>The posts are grant funded so have no financial implications.</p>	

Biodiversity is considered by WG as an underpinning pillar of sustainable development, improvements to biodiversity through the project, as developed by the staff, will contribute towards delivery of sustainable development.

A full impact assessment (second stage) **is** required

Reasons for this conclusion

	Name	Position	Signature	Date
Completed by				
Signed off by		Head of Service/Director		