



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

CABINET

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION AND HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

22nd February 2023

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: Onllwyn, Crynant and Seven Sisters

Establishment of an advisory panel in respect of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence

Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to note the terms of reference to the Global Centre of Rail Excellence Advisory Panel (“GCRE”) established by GCRE Ltd and to agree Council representatives to the various committees established by this Advisory Panel, following a request by GCRE Ltd.

Executive Summary:

GCRE Ltd have informed the Council that for GCRE to achieve its outcomes and give value to the rail and energy industry, private shareholders and the community it will be necessary to ensure formal, regular and informed dialogue takes place with industry/academia and the local community. They have established an Advisory Panel to enable this dialogue to take place and be a conduit for non-binding advice to be shared between GCRE and the local and industrial communities which it serves.

It is intended that the Advisory Panel will be informed by committees whose Chairs and Vice Chairs will form the membership of the Advisory panel. These committees will themselves be formed of individuals who represent interested parties and whose own expertise, knowledge or position will bring value to GCRE. It will be the committees where the core work of the Advisory Panel will be done. The Advisory Panel itself will be a mechanism for pulling together the

work of the committees and helping to translate their outputs to clear business objectives for GCRE.

GCRE Ltd have invited representatives from the Council to sit on committees being created by the Advisory Panel and it is accordingly proposed that elected members and officers be nominated as representatives to these committees.

The GCRE advisory structure and its constituent committees does not seek to impact or undermine any of the statutory, legal or planning processes of the local authority or any other public body.

Background:

In response to demand from the rail industry and with support from the Welsh and UK Governments, GCRE Ltd is developing an internationally recognised Rail Research, Test, Validation and Innovation Centre.

GCRE Ltd have informed the Council that for GCRE to achieve its outcomes and give value to the rail and energy industry, private shareholders and the community it will be necessary to ensure formal, regular and informed dialogue takes place with industry/academia and the local community. They have established an Advisory Panel to enable this dialogue to take place and be a conduit for non-binding advice to be shared between GCRE and the local and industrial communities which it serves.

It is intended that the Advisory Panel will be informed by committees whose Chairs and Vice Chairs will form the membership of the Advisory panel. These committees will themselves be formed of individuals who represent interested parties and whose own expertise, knowledge or position will bring value to GCRE. It will be the committees where the core work of the Advisory Panel will be done. The Advisory Panel itself will be a mechanism for pulling together the work of the committees and helping to translate their outputs to clear business objectives for GCRE.

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The terms of reference of the Advisory Panel are included at Appendix 1 of this report.

Of particular relevance to the Council are the creation of the Community Committee and the Local Liaison Group. The details of which are set out in Appendix 1 but summarised below.

Community Committee

The Community Committee of the GCRE Advisory Panel will ensure GCRE engages with its stakeholders who represent the interests of the communities which will benefit from and are impacted by the GCRE. The Committee will receive a broad range of input which will influence and direct our work. The Community Committee is designed to add value to the local relationships that can help to make GCRE a success and does not seek to impact or undermine any of the statutory legal or planning processes of the local authority or any other public body.

The Community Committee will be the formal route for working with elected representatives from local authorities, and the Welsh and UK parliaments. It will allow the concerns and ambitions of the community to be shared with the GCRE company and to facilitate a two way flow of information to allow constructive dialogue to take place.

Attendees will include representatives of local communities and government. Guests representing varying subjects and themes will be invited from time to time.

The Community Committee will:

- receive updates from GCRE Ltd from public consultations and community engagement exercises which it will undertake from time to time, and from the work of the Local Liaison Group.
- provide a formal mechanism for elected representatives to raise concerns with GCRE, and to pursue their resolution
- provide input and support to GCRE Ltd as it prepares and submits bids for wider economic development via Growth Deal, Shared Prosperity Fund, Freeport and other opportunities (noting that there may be some conflicts of interest to be managed)
- provide a ready-made governance function to oversee implementation of any of the bids which may be successful.

- receive feedback from GCRE Ltd on progress against plans, and the development of future plans
- support (where conflicts can be managed) development plans and future planning applications to further develop the GCRE site in preparation for formal legal and planning processes
- ensure the views and needs of those with protected characteristics are heard, as outlined in the Equalities Act 2010.
- hold GCRE Ltd to account for delivering Social Value objectives (jobs, training and other measures).
- comment upon and input to the GCRE Communications Strategy
- in the short term support the development of the GCRE brand identity

It is proposed that membership of the Community Committee will comprise:

- Independent Chair
- Member of Welsh Parliament for Neath
- Member of UK Parliament for Neath
- Member of Welsh Parliament for Brecon & Radnorshire
- Member of UK Parliament for Brecon & Radnorshire
- Leader of Powys County Council or their nominated deputy
- Leader of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council or their nominated deputy
- GCRE sponsoring official representing the Climate Change and Economy Ministers Welsh Government
- GCRE sponsoring official representing the Secretary of State for Wales
- Nominated lead official of Powys County Council
- Nominated lead official of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Representatives of the GCRE executive team as invited by the Chair and committee.

Accordingly, approval is sought for the Leader of Council to be nominated as the representative to the Community Committee and authority to be granted to the Leader to nominate a cabinet member to attend in his absence.

In addition, approval is sought for the Director of Environment and Regeneration to be nominated as lead official for the Council, again with the delegated authority for the Director of Environment and Regeneration to nominate a deputy to attend in her absence.

Local Liaison Group

It is proposed that the Local Liaison Group which will feed views from local residents into the Community Committee, will meet quarterly to be given updates on GCRE progress and plans for the following quarter, to address and resolve any complaints and to disburse any community levy required of GCRE. The group will comprise:

- Independent Chair
- Two elected members of Powys County Council representing adjacent wards.
- Two elected members of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council representing adjacent wards
- Community Councillors from each of the Powys County Council wards
- Community Councillors from each of the adjacent Neath Port Talbot wards
- Representative of commoners
- Plus representatives of the GCRE executive team as invited by the Chair.

The adjacent ward of GCRE is the ward of Onllwyn, Crynant and Seven Sisters, accordingly it is proposed that the two elected members of this ward be nominated to sit on the Local Liaison Group as the two elected members of the Council.

Financial Impacts:

No implications.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not requirement for this report.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce Impacts:

No implications

Legal Impacts:

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 includes a general power of competence which would allow the Council to be part of such advisory forums and committees

It should be noted however that even though involvement is proposed to each of these committees, nothing in these terms of reference shall fetter or prejudice NPT's statutory rights, powers, directions and responsibilities under all statutes, bylaws, statutory instruments, orders and regulations in the exercise of their functions as a local authority. This will ensure that the Council retains its important role as a regulatory body in respect of the planning and environmental functions that it holds.

The involvement in these committees does not commit the authority to any particular courses of action and members will have to act in accordance with the terms of reference of these groups, with future reports being brought to members if a determination is needed on any particular matter which sits outside of the terms of reference.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- Members note the terms of reference of the Advisory Panel for the Global Centre of Rail Excellence as established by GCRE Ltd and note the invite to the Council to participate in this work programme;

- Members nominate the Leader of Council to be the Council representative to the Community Committee of the Advisory Panel to the Global Centre of Rail Excellence;
- Members authorise the Leader of Council to nominate an alternative Cabinet member to attend the Community Committee of the Advisory Panel to the Global Centre of Rail Excellence in the event that the Leader is unable to attend;
- Members nominate the Director of Environment and Regeneration of the Council to be the Council Lead Official to the Community Committee of the Advisory Panel to the Global Centre of Rail Excellence;
- Members authorise the Director of Environment and Regeneration of the Council to nominate an alternative office to attend the Community Committee of the Advisory Panel to the Global Centre of Rail Excellence in the event that the Chief Executive is unable to attend; and
- Members nominate the ward members for Onllwyn, Crynant and Seven Sisters to be the ward representatives to the Local Liaison Group

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Global Centre of Rail Excellence – Advisory Panel Terms of Reference

List of Background Papers:

None

Officer Contact:

Mrs Nicola Pearce
Director of Environment and Regeneration

Mr Craig Griffiths
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

