

## ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2022

### TOWN CLERK'S UPDATE

#### 1. PLANNING AID WALES

A 12 month access to the Planning Aid Wales Portal to enable all Councillors on the Environment Committee to undertake the necessary training to enable proper consideration of planning applications, can be arranged for £150 plus vat. This access to our subscription for 22/23 of Online training, 'Planning from Start to Finish' will require the Town Clerk to send details of the email addresses of all who will need to take this training. The cost covers up to 20 licences, so all Councillors will have the opportunity to take this training, as well as the Town Clerk. The course is produced specifically for Town and Community Councils, and is a perfect introduction to or refresher on all aspects of the planning system in Wales. The course will take around 2 hours to complete in one sitting or can be viewed in parts (the course is broken into 20+ short video sections).

This course provides an introduction to the following topics:

Overview – how planning works & who's who in planning in Wales.

Planning Policy – national policy, Local Development Plans and Place Plans

Planning Applications – how planning applications are processed, how decisions are made and how to respond to planning applications.

The role of Community and Town Councils in all of the above.

A sample video can be viewed on their website:

<https://training.planningaidwales.org.uk/>

#### 2. BRECON BEACONS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY TOURISM CONFERENCE

The Town Clerk attended the online conference on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The theme for the conference was Sustainable Tourism and Visitor Management. The BBNPA have recently undergone an audit of their service provision to help shape the future of the National Park Service to develop a new workplan. Gareth Jones is their new Director of Planning and Place, and he spoke about the key strength in partnership working, He recognised the growing issues around the phosphate levels in rivers, climate change, transport, and how we can play a role in developing sustainable tourism for all going forward.

Lucy Von Weber from Visit Wales gave a presentation on the year round promotions they now invest in, to grow tourism in the autumn and winter months to extend the traditional seasons. Lots of focus on value over volume – seasonality/spend/spread. Interesting to hear the rise in "Voluntourism" – volunteer tourism – which is a sector that is growing.

Kate Gardner from the National Trust gave an update on the parking being developed for hill walkers to improve the visitor experience – installation of WCs and electric charge points, bike parking.

Laura Thomas from Brecon Beacons Tourism Association delivered a presentation on how Reels and Videos are getting better reaches when looking at promotional materials. A big move to Instagram for where visitors look to check out 'experiences' available to them when visiting places.

Carol Williams spoke about the Ambassadors Online course which has been launched which offers three levels of certification covering topics such as Geoparks, Dark Sky, Wildlife: these are free online courses available to all.

Alan Bowring gave an update on the Geopark Revalidation where Fforest Fawr has achieved a Green Card status as a UNESCO Global Geopark. Plans are underway for GeoFest 2022, and a Geodiversity Day in October.

Helen Roderick – Stakeholder Manager and former Communities and Tourism Manager at BBNPA spoke about the Waterfalls 4Falls Trail. New coordinator is now in post located at Cwmporth, and looking at designing new facilities there. Also gave an update on the Shuttle bus trial in the Glyn Neath area as part of the sustainable transport plans. This will run again in the summer months at weekends to try alleviating the number of vehicles in the area and is funded by Neath Port Talbot County Council. Looking at A470 Sustainable Transport Links – WG money secured for a park and ride scheme to be launched.

The Sustainable Tourism Audit gave recommendations on a shared vision of sustainable tourism, to rebuild tourism staff capacity and improve stakeholder involvement. The findings of the draft national park management 'Future Beacons' contains a bold agenda for sustainable tourism. Next steps will be to develop an action plan, build staff capacity, engage with communities and businesses to ensure full involvement in Sustainable Tourism.