

Agenda Item 7

Response to Gower AONB rebrand proposals

January 2024

Founded in 1948 (before designation) The Gower Society has now over 1500 members. Our answers below have been formulated by a small group of committee members representing the membership.

What positives do you see this rebrand bringing to Gower, its communities and its visitors?

- The new title *Gower National Landscape* probably adds more gravitas to the designation. It is easier to recall and remember.
- With the new title, Gower should benefit from the greater focus and initiative.
- Generate the opportunity for the designation to be managed as a partnership by a wider range of stakeholders and be a significant part of the new family with this new name.

What negatives can you envision?

- Gower was the first AONB. With the new 'brand' National Landscapes, there is danger that this status will be lost. We feel strongly that this identity is not forgotten. Full title should be:

GOWER NATIONAL LANDSCAPE – FIRST UK AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

- Concern that greater focus on Gower, will lead to greater number of visitors, increase road users, parking problems, litter, caravan and campsites overflowing, fly camping increase, overcrowded honey spots such as Rhossili.
- Danger that this is merely a 'cosmetic' process, with no assurance of increase in resources or funding.
- There is no reference in the proposal that this new title is to be in Welsh. To be inclusive to all our communities, GOWER NATIONAL LANDSCAPE must be bilingual.

Do you have any other thoughts, comments, concerns or ideas with regards to this rebrand?

- Our sincere request is that this new name should be the opportunity for the unitary authority (Swansea) to focus its efforts with more vigour and integrity to better manage Gower National Landscape and provide the resources that have been lacking for too long.
- It must be managed in partnership with landowners, NRW, National Trust, West Wales Wildlife Trust, The Gower Society, Community Councils, walking groups, horse-riding groups, cycling groups, tourism organisations, commoners, farmers – and the council departments Planning, Highways etc.

Referring to Marsden Review of National Landscapes of Wales (2015)

Local Partnerships Successful management of the special areas depends on productive partnerships with all those who have an impact on them. We want them to be even more relevant economically, socially and culturally, which will require enhanced and effective local engagement between all relevant stakeholders.

- If growing numbers are attracted to Gower, there must assurance that the designation is respected by all and for all. Improving awareness must include that our landscapes need protecting.

Referring to Landscapes Review (2019)

Strengthening the role of designated landscapes would require greater resourcing but not simply in financial terms, but also access to training, advice, information resources etc. Some of this exists and simply requires better signposting or minor strategic investment. Strengthening their role also necessitates a review of governance structures.

For many years, the local authority has not conducted carrying capacity survey, or monitored caravan numbers closely in recent years.

Do you think Gower should adopt the principals and recommendations from the National Landscape Association to rebrand?

- **Yes**
But with the proviso that this brand being "more accessible and inclusive" leading to increased visitor numbers, must mean stronger protection of the natural landscape.

Gower Society February 2024

Mike Scott (Environment)

From: STEVE HEARD [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 February 2024 21:45
To: Mike Scott (Environment)
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Gower AONB Advisory Group rebranding

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Mike

Please find my comments regarding the suggested rebranding of the Gower ANOB to National Landscape Association (NLA)

I have concerns regarding the rebranding of the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB) to the National Landscape Association (NLA)

- 1) I do not feel that this change is actually required. During our last meeting, comments were made regarding the awareness within the nation regarding ANOBs and the 16-24 age group were mentioned as an example. To be frank this does not particularly surprise me as, most 16-24 yr olds are not bothered about such groupings but are more interested in going to a beach, which may be within the ANOB. It would have been more salient, if the full age groups interviewed were supplied along with the questions asked, so that the true "awareness" and the methods used were able to be scrutinised.
- 2) Gower has the honour of being the first and therefore "original" ANOB. This identity wis likely to be lost by becoming amalgamated onto a larger amorphous grouping
- 3) Many residents both indigenous and incoming, feel that they are part of and are proud to live in the 1st ANOB and are not being consulted. This is in my opinion a mistake
- 4) There are many businesses both small and large within Gower and further afield, who have set up their business identity allied with the ANOB. This will be an affiliation and relevance which will be lost by this action. The holiday sector in particular will be hard hit by this change, as will agricultural and associated industry. One large business, the Gower Brewery is an example of this, their motto "Ales of outstanding natural beauty" will become meaningless
- 5) Much has been said regarding the 'financial" aspect of this change. I can see that it is easier to negotiate funding for a "national" group, but is this a valid reason to change? Governments

local, devolved and national can not, without severe difficulty, remove the ANOB status and will, in reality find it impossible not to fund. Our local authority, The City and County of Swansea, do not in my opinion understand nor put serious investment to our identity nor infrastructure, despite this being one of their obligations. By their encouragement of this amalgamation, it may assist them to remove their obligation

6) I understand that we will retain the identity (all be it secondary) Gower ANOB which will run alongside the NLA title. I have concerns that this will confuse and supply a type of dual personality to the area. This can only lead to confusion and a sense of not belonging to either grouping

7) I am concerned that this amalgamation has in reality, been agreed and that going to the Advisory panel at this stage is more of a tick box exercise I say this from experience as there have many examples of decisions being brought to our attention long after the decision has been made. It is extremely interesting that a logo has already been agreed for the proposed identity, before agreement has been made to accept the proposal

I hope that you will accept my comments in the manner they are presented, I understand that our role as members of the Advisory panel is to assist and to advise, I do not believe that we, not for the first time, have been given sufficient information nor time to advise one way or the other.

Regards

Steve Heard

Response to Gower AONB rebrand proposals

January 2024

What positives do you see this rebrand bringing to Gower, its communities and its visitors?

The AONB designation has been a well known and understood brand within conservation circles since its formation. However outside of this small circle its relevance is less clear and certainly is less well known than the National Park brand. To stay relevant to the wider populations of the UK and not just the conservation world we need a name that is easily more understood and recognised. Hopefully this will achieve this.

What negatives can you envision?

There is a risk that a change of name may cause confusion, particularly in the first 12 months. To avoid this there would need to be a large media 'push', particularly on social media where a lot of 'casual' visitors to the countryside get their information.

Do you have any other thoughts, comments, concerns or ideas with regards to this rebrand?

I think this is a positive move, particularly in the light that this has already been widely adopted in England and being left behind is riskier than looking to the future.

Without a large media plan this does run the risk of causing some confusion and negative fallout on social media platforms.

Do you think Gower should adopt the principals and recommendations from the National Landscape Association to rebrand?

- Yes
- No

Alan Kearsley-Evans
General Manager for Brecon Beacons and Gower
National Trust

Response to Gower AONB rebrand proposals

January 2024

What positives do you see this rebrand bringing to Gower, its communities and its visitors?

Better visible branding (e.g. may encourage people to search online more easily) this also brings more readily recognisable signage and also expectations.

What negatives can you envision?

In some people's responses, a perceived loss of "individuality" in the Gower AONB

Do you have any other thoughts, comments, concerns or ideas with regards to this rebrand?

I think it's great.

Do you think Gower should adopt the principals and recommendations from the National Landscape Association to rebrand?

- Yes indeed!
- No

Judith Doyle - Stewardship Officer, GGAT

From: Clive Scott
Sent on: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 2:24:53 PM
To: Mike Scott (Environment)
CC:

[Redacted content]

Subject: Re: Gower AONB Advisory Group - Reminder about Rebranding Comments

Follow up: Follow up
Start date: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 12:00:00 AM
Due date: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 12:00:00 AM

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4 points below that summarise why I would support the re-branding

- 1) The re-branding is a 'development' as part of the evolution from AONB's to a future organisation that has more influence and can become comparable in its effectiveness to National Parks.
- 2) Adopting the 're-branding' is a positive step and means that Gower AONB's current status can be built on.
- 3) We can all challenge the new name but that would just become a quagmire of subjectivity

GOWER NATIONAL LANDSCAPE
An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
— sounds good.

4) Opposing the re-branding would probably leave Gower AONB isolated and weak. The first AONB would probably become the last AONB. I cannot see any logical reasons to oppose the re-branding.

On 13 Feb 2024, at 12:30, Mike Scott (Environment) <Mike.Scott@swansea.gov.uk> wrote:

<image001.gif>

Hi all – I just wanted to remind you that we need your written comments and opinions on the rebranding proposals by Monday 19th February.

We will also be taking verbal comments at the Advisory meeting on 26th February, as we put together the report for Swansea Council.

Here is a link to a short film produced by the National Landscape Association (formerly the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty):
[Welcome to National Landscapes](#)

This is an example of the social media that they are producing, to raise the profile of the National Landscapes across England and Wales.

Cofion / Regards

Mike Scott

<image003.png>

Mike Scott

Swyddog AOHNE Gwyr
Gower AONB Officer

[Redacted signature]

Response to Gower AONB rebrand proposals

Cllr Paul Lloyd - January 2024

What positives do you see this rebrand bringing to Gower, its communities and its visitors?

A refreshed purpose. Plus it will help it to contribute to the Welsh government's policies & ambitions. Contribute to the health & wellbeing of both residents & visitors. It will increase participation in Gower across a wider range of groups.

What negatives can you envision?

Have to be aware of resistance to change.

Do you have any other thoughts, comments, concerns or ideas with regards to this rebrand?

I look forward to progressing the rebrand. To ensure its success, we have to ensure that we bring everyone along with us.

Do you think Gower should adopt the principals and recommendations from the National Landscape Association to rebrand?

- **X Yes**
- No

Response to Gower AONB rebrand proposals

Barbara Parry - January 2024

What positives do you see this rebrand bringing to Gower, its communities and its visitors?

I would hope that it raises awareness of the work the Team do on Gower and thereby promotes the positivity of the partnership with the communities.

What negatives can you envision?

People may say 'if it ain't broke, don't mend it' so it would be important to highlight the positive points to the community.

Do you have any other thoughts, comments, concerns or ideas with regards to this rebrand?

Do you think Gower should adopt the principals and recommendations from the National Landscape Association to rebrand?

- Yes

From: Paxton Hood-Williams (Councillor [redacted])
Sent on: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 4:28:11 PM
To: Mike Scott (Environment) [redacted]
Subject: National Landscape rebranding

Follow up: Follow up
Start date: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 12:00:00 AM
Due date: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 12:00:00 AM

Good afternoon Mike

Just a quick note to say I support the rebranding change to National Landscape, albeit we have to ensure that we can still refer to the term AONB and its expansion.

Stay safe and well

Paxton

Cllr. Paxton Hood-Williams

[redacted signature block]

Mike Scott (Environment)

From: Osborn, Hamish [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 February 2024 12:24
To: Mike Scott (Environment)
Subject: RE: Gower AONB Advisory Group - Reminder about Rebranding Comments

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Hi Mike

Apologies for the late reply.

My very brief comments:

In general, I am positive about the rebranding. It does come with some risks and I hear what, for example, Steve Heard has said and I think the points he raises are important and need consideration and managed.

I have asked within NRW and was told that "the designation itself remains AONB, along with the relevant legislation" so that how Gower is rebranded is largely a matter for the AONB team/council.

As a member of the advisory group I have a foot on both camps so to speak so I am responding as such.

I am positive for most of the reasons set out in the presentation. I feel that a rebrand should be treated as an opportunity and it will be helpful to align ourselves to other areas that are doing the same. Whilst we are Gower-centric on our views and we see Gower as epitomising an AONB, we are only one of many and we are in fact quite small and there is strength in working together. For example, we will capitalise on other people's education and interpretation work; so that the things they learn about the landscape designations both centrally and from visits elsewhere should be translatable when visiting Gower.

If we do rebrand, however, I would wish to see that sufficient resources were made available to make the process a success and to capitalise on the opportunity. We face many challenges but we need to redouble our efforts to tackle the climate and nature emergencies and we must put any rebranding process to work to help to do this. How we do that needs to be discussed; but it is, in my opinion, vital.

My support is partly based on the assumption that you and the team feel that rebranding would be a good thing. If you do not then I would be less enthusiastic. Either way I believe that we need to do all we can to make sure we don't spiral into a polemic discussion on this and other related issues in the Advisory Group and that we keep a positive and pragmatic outlook.

If you need more from me then let me know.

Regards

Response to Gower AONB rebrand proposals

Cllr Lynda James - January 2024

What positives do you see this rebrand bringing to Gower, its communities and its visitors?

None at all

What negatives can you envision?

1. Gowers identity as the first and therefore "original" ANOB, will be lost in larger grouping.
2. It will be confusing to many, locals and visitors
3. An adverse affect I many Gower businesses, especially tourism, who use the AONB to promote themselves.
4. I do not see that it will effect funding for the area, but will obviously cost money to carry out any changes.

Do you have any other thoughts, comments, concerns or ideas with regards to this rebrand?

Gower residents in general are not being consulted about what is their home.

Do you think Gower should adopt the principals and recommendations from the National Landscape Association to rebrand?

- NO