



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group

At: Remotely via Microsoft Teams

On: Monday, 6 December 2021

Time: 2.00 pm

Chair: Councillor Paul Lloyd

Membership:

Councillors: M C Child, P R Hood-Williams, L James, A H Stevens and M Thomas

Steering Group Members: R Button, J Chambers, J France, S Heard, G Howe, P Jenkins, H Osborn, B Parry, P Thornton and D P Tucker

Watch Online: <https://bit.ly/3FSc3rH>

Agenda

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Next Meeting: Monday, 14 March 2022 at 2.00 pm

Huw Evans

Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Tuesday, 30 November 2021

Contact: Democratic Services: - 636923

Agenda Item 3



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 4 October 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

Councillors

P R Hood-Williams L James

Steering Group Members

J France G Howe P Jenkins
H Osborn B Parry P Thornton

Officer(s)

Paul Meller Natural Environment Section Manager
Chris Lindley Gower AONB Team Leader
Mike Scott Gower AONB Officer
Jeremy Parkhouse Democratic Services Officer
Sean Hathaway Environment Officer, Nature Conservation Team
Ursula Jones Communities and Nature Project Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillors: M C Child, A H Stevens and M Thomas
Steering Group Members: R Button and D P Tucker

10 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

11 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 5 July 2021 be approved as a correct record.

12 Financial Summary. (For Information) (Mike Scott)

Mike Scott, Gower AONB Officer presented the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Panel Financial Summary report 'for information'.

It was highlighted that Welsh Government had confirmed the SDF budget for 2021/22 at £100,000. It was added that 15 projects had been approved, with £100,000 committed, fully committing the funds for 2020/21 as outlined below.

The Committed Funds figure included the CCS Management Fee of £7,500.55.

Total Funds available	£100,000
Committed Funds	£100,000
Uncommitted Funds	£0
Applications in progress	£0

13 Draft Amendments to Process of Appointing to the Sustainable Development Fund Grant Panel. (Mike Scott)

The Gower AONB Officer updated the Steering Group regarding draft amendments to the process of appointing to the Sustainable Development Fund Grant Panel.

It was outlined that the Welsh Government had requested changes to the way the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants panels was appointed, and was aimed at ensuring that the panels consist of a diverse demographic of members, with representation from the AONB Partnership. The proposed Terms of Reference Procedural / Guidance Notes were provided at Appendix A.

It was proposed that the current process be amended to appoint members of the SDF Grant Panel and the SDF Appeals Panel. Currently, members of the Steering Group nominated 4 members of each panel every two years, for a term of two years. To meet the Welsh Governments guidance, it was proposed that the steering group appointed two members of each panel each year, for a term of two years.

The procedure amendment would enable a rolling appointment process, keeping the skills built up by the panel membership, while also introducing new members of the panel. Annual introductions to the work of the SDF grants panel would be provided, as part of the established programme of meetings.

The Chair commented that the amendment was a sensible proposal.

Resolved that the procedure amendment be approved and be forwarded for formal approval by the Council.

14 Landscape & Biodiversity Grant Scheme. (Verbal) (Mike Scott)

The Gower AONB Officer provided a verbal report on the Landscape & Biodiversity Grant Scheme.

He added that it would be part of the Sustainable Development Fund and would be aimed at community groups for schemes such as dry stone walling, hedging, copping, fencing, orchard creation, natural flood management and wildflower meadow creation. Schemes would be limited to 50% funding up to £3,000. Notes and the proposed application form would be circulated prior to the next meeting.

The Steering Group discussed including small architectural features / small buildings in the Scheme and ring-fencing the Scheme budget.

Resolved that the Scheme be approved and Officers proceed with its administration.

15 Presentation - Gower AONB Communities and Nature Project Officer. (Ursula Jones)

Ursula Jones, Communities and Nature Project Officer provided the Steering Group with a short presentation on her current role within the Gower AONB Team.

She provided details of the projects she had worked on since commencing the role in July 2021, including the Japanese Knotweed continuation programme in Parkmill / Ilston, footpath improvement works, grazing on Fairwood Common and the development of a management plan for Clyne Valley.

The Chair thanked her for her presentation and wished her well in her role.

16 Gower AONB Tourism Pressures 2021. (Gordon Howe, Gower Society)

Gordon Howe, Gower Society presented a report on Gower AONB Tourism pressures in 2021 which highlighted two distinct but closely interrelated issues: tourist capacity and visitor management.

The report made reference to the pressure being exerted upon Swansea Council and the Senedd to relax the current rules and regulations relating to camping i.e. tents, yurts and glamping on Gower. This was covered locally by the Local Development Plan (LDP) and it was defined in Sections TR6-TR9.

It was explained that permitted development rights were extended from 28 days to 56 days by the Government because of the Covid 19 Pandemic, to allow more tourism within the UK. While camping on Gower was exempt from this due to the changes brought about by the Article 4 during the 1970's, it had not stopped pop up mobile cafes and additional car parking. The lack of policing / official checking of wild camping / camper vans was outlined, along with the use of social media to highlight areas that were not checked or pop up attractions.

The increased pressure upon the AONB during 2020-2021 was emphasised, with most existing camping sites being full to capacity and unlawful activities being reported but not acted upon. Smaller official sites had also been inundated with requests and there was evidence that larger sites had soaked up much of the demand at the expense of the pleasure of normal customers and residents of Gower.

Reference was made to ongoing discussions within the Council, acceptance that some well concealed locations may be suitable for small additional sites, not permitting inappropriate and visually damaging locations, firmly policing licensed sites, the lack of a formal caravan survey by the Council since 2009 and the lack of a traffic survey on Gower to determine increased tourism numbers.

The report also highlighted increased tourism and the money being made out of the Gower brand, the lack of investment into protecting the AONB, Gower rapidly losing its character and was in danger of becoming a glorified theme park.

It further highlighted the demographic change of visitors to Gower, the increase in rough camping, the lack of resources to combat it, the lack of public disposal points for camper vans, the need for front line staff in Gower, organisations re-investing their income back into the AONB and using social media to educate and inform visitors to Gower.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- Similar issues affecting other areas in Wales / UK;
- The messages from Government / Welsh Government was for the public to stay local and enjoy the local environment / facilities and it was important to understand the impact of activities upon areas;
- The positive messages that can be sent via social media;
- The importance of positive engagement with the public;
- More finances being provided to National Parks to assist them in managing the issues highlighted;
- The profit made by individuals / companies in Gower / from the Gower brand;
- The need for an annual caravan survey on Gower;
- The need for a traffic survey on Gower, particularly in areas such as Rhossili where 1,000 cars per hour were visiting the village;
- Setting up a working group to discuss the issue going forward.

Resolved that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) A working group be formed and facilitated by the Gower AONB Team Leader;
- 3) Councillor L James, Gordon Howe, Barbara Parry and Hamish Osborn be added to the membership of the working group;
- 4) Representatives from Tourism and Highways be requested to attend the working group.

17 National Designated Landscapes Partnership - Autumn Seminar. (Chris Lindley)

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report which informed the Steering Group on the National Designated Landscapes Partnership Autumn Seminar.

The report provided the background to Tirweddau Cymru - Landscapes Wales and it was outlined that Designated landscapes had a critical role in taking action on climate and nature emergencies. It was added that following the Senedd declaring a nature emergency, designated landscapes were committed to playing their part on delivering on this declaration.

It was highlighted that Gower AONB Partnership members were invited to join Tirweddau Cymru - Landscapes Wales online on 19 October 2021 to hear about work going on across designated landscapes in Wales on the themes of:

- Climate change and decarbonisation;
- Nature based solutions and nature recovery;
- Sustainable Tourism; and
- Supporting communities to respond to COVID and promote a green recovery.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

18 UK Government Consultation on Strengthening Enforcement of the Dangerous Use of Recreational and Personal Watercraft. (Chris Lindley)

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report which detailed the UK Government Consultation on Strengthening Enforcement of the Dangerous Use of Recreational and Personal Watercraft.

It was outlined that the UK Government was consulting on proposed changes to legislation that would bring recreational and personal watercraft within scope of the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

By this change:

- personal watercraft and other recreational watercraft users will be subject to the same safety obligations, where appropriate, that exist for the operators of ships
- enforcement authorities will have an additional power of prosecution to be used in cases of deliberate or negligent misuse

It was added that Maritime safety was the responsibility of the UK Government; if the proposed changes were enacted, they would apply to Wales as a constituent part of the UK.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- the hugely disruptive nature / noise of jet skis and how they significantly affect a large number of people / wildlife;
- The need for individuals using watercraft to be respectful of other people / wildlife;
- Approaching manufacturers to make certain watercraft less noisy.

The Chair encouraged all present to comment upon the consultation.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 2.53 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 4



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 6 December 2021

Mass Participation Events

Members have raised concerns regarding the potential impacts of mass participation events on Gower AONB. This paper outlines the current context to stimulate discussion on the matter at the AONB Partnership.

These events are focussed either on sporting activity (such as marathons and triathlons) or challenge events marketed at a broader audience that focus on raising money for charities (e.g. Macmillan Mighty Hike). The events tend to be promoted, organised and delivered by professional companies and/or charitable organisations.

There are in the region of 30,000 of these events being promoted at any one time throughout the UK; whilst many of these will be in towns and cities, many fundraising organisations raise funds from events based outdoors whereby individuals or teams are challenged to complete a course that is sufficiently compelling to attract sponsorship. Such events are often held in areas of attractive landscape including National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

These events are opportunities to showcase the landscape, its wildlife and culture. As well as generating funds for charities, there are typically revenue opportunities for local landowners, businesses and other suppliers. There are also health and well-being benefits from training and participating in such events.

However, events have the potential for negative impacts on an area. The Chartered Institute of Fundraising has published guidance on how to run outdoor challenge events in the UK. The guidance highlights that fundraisers and charities should be aware of the impact on local communities, infrastructure, and to the environment in putting on these events and take all reasonable steps to minimise these. The impact on local residents, roads, other users, facilities, footpaths, wildlife and the wider landscape can be damaging, and can damage an organisation's reputation if the event does not take steps to minimise their effect. Failure to ensure this could also risk other organisation's being able to put on similar challenge events in the future. See:-

[Chartered Institute of Fundraising - Outdoor UK challenge events \(ciof.org.uk\)](https://www.ciof.org.uk)

Further guidance for specific areas has been developed by landscape authorities. For example, Brecon Beacons National Park guidance is directed at both:

- Organisers - To help ensure that their participants enjoy the special qualities of the National Park and leave it in good condition for others to do the same; and
- Landowners - advice for landowners considering hosting events on their land

See:

[GUIDANCE FOR OUTDOOR ACCESS EVENTS IN THE NATIONAL PARK
\(beacons-npa.gov.uk\)](https://www.beacons-npa.gov.uk/guidance-for-outdoor-access-events-in-the-national-park)

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

29 November 2021

Agenda Item 5



Report of the Clyne Valley Community Project Representative

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 6 December 2021

Clyne Valley Country Park

To AONB Steering Group for your consideration from Clyne Valley Community Project.

Clyne Valley Community Project (CVCP) was established 10 years ago to:

- improve and maintain Access in the Clyne Valley
- protect and enhance the natural habitat of species and to encourage and promote biodiversity in the Clyne Valley, maintaining as small a footprint as possible
- encourage research and interpretation of the history and archaeology of the Valley
- promote the health and well-being of users of the Clyne Valley
- develop and encourage the use and enjoyment of the Clyne Valley as a community resource for leisure pursuits, educational purposes and family activities

CVCP is a volunteer organisation and have a Management Agreement with Swansea Council, who own the 700 acres of the Country Park. CVCP endeavour to maintain and share the riches of Clyne Valley with the community. It is a huge task:

Over recent months we have:

- Carried out a Japanese Knotweed survey of the whole valley
- Cleared the Mumbles Road Station of vegetation
- Held a 'Get to Know the Valley' day of walks and activities
- Completed several litter picks
- Trampled the bracken encroaching upon the fruit trees in Kate's Orchard
- Pulled and cut back Pheasant Berry
- Provided the muscle and graft to construct 3 new bridges across the river Clyne
- Resumed interviewing and recording locals to add to our History Archive
- Brush cut several paths.

This beautiful green valley, 3 miles from the centre of Swansea, has long been a wonderful resource for many people and was 'discovered' by even more people during the restrictions of the pandemic.

Since the Environment Section at Swansea Council have recently taken 'responsibility' for the Country Park, we have worked closely with them in planning and implementing improvements in the valley and this partnership continues with more developments to come. The AONB team are preparing a Management Plan for the Valley and this month Chris Lindley and Ursula Jones gave a presentation to CVCP members titled the 'Future of Clyne Valley' explaining the process they are following to construct a Management Plan for the valley.

Other Management Plans for Clyne Valley have been written in the past but these seem to have lived in a drawer - probably due to lack of funds, personnel and intent.

There are many Parks in Swansea but only one Country Park: Clyne Valley. Many parks have a dedicated team of Council employees to sustain them, but Clyne Valley does not. Recent Welsh Government funding has enabled the Environment section at Swansea Council to work with us and make huge improvements in the Valley. But, our fear is that this may not be sustained. Too many projects start with a bang and end with a whimper.

CVCP believe that a Warden / Ranger be appointed with responsibility for the Country Park and to oversee the Management Plan and its implementation. CVCP have even considered funding such a role but feel that it is not for a voluntary organisation to fund the care and maintenance of 700 acres of Council land.

We hope we can have the support of the AONB Steering Group in this matter and help us take it forward.

Barbara Parry
December 2021
Chair of Clyne Valley Community Project.
<https://clynevalleycommunityproject.uk/>

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 6 December 2021

Report on the Review of the Gower Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study for Caravan and Camping Sites 2014

For Information

Introduction

The Gower Landscape Character Assessment, 2013, identified caravan and campsites as being a significant threat to the landscape quality of the AONB due to their detrimental visual impact. As a result, in 2014 the Council commissioned John Campion Associates to undertake the more detailed Gower Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (hereafter referred to as 'the Study'), to identify areas at landscape capacity, in terms of caravan and camping sites, and areas which might have potential for expansion of facilities, whilst taking account of the capacity and suitability of the area to accommodate such expansion.

The Use of the Study in Development Management

The Study provides an important factual evidence document that informed the drafting of planning policies for the Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP) in relation to tourism accommodation on, and in close vicinity to, the Gower AONB.

The following LDP policies cite the Study and state that applicants must demonstrate the proposed development site is within an area of landscape capacity, as evidenced in the Study:

- TR5: Holiday Accommodation
- TR6: New Static Caravan, Touring Caravan and/or Camping Sites within the AONB
- TR9: Extensions To, and Overflow Areas of, Touring Caravan and/or Camping Sites
- TR10: Short-Term 'Festival' Camping Events

The Study has proved a useful tool in guiding new tourism development to less conspicuous locations where the detrimental impact on the designated landscape and seascape is minimised.

Review and Update of the Study

It is necessary to undertake an update of this work to accurately reflect the landscape impacts of caravan and campsites, document any material landscape changes and monitor any impacts of development since 2014, in order to provide an up-date evidence document to support the LDP.

An important consideration has been the introduction and popularity of alternative forms of accommodation since the 2014 Study. For example Pods, Lodges, shipping containers and other forms of non-operational development are becoming much more popular as forms of holiday accommodation. They are all forms of non-operational development and may have less landscape impact than traditional static caravans, even though they remain on site all year.

John Champion Associates have been commissioned by Swansea Council to undertake the review. The review has been part funded by AONB Grant monies from NRW.

The Review has been delayed to the Covid-19 pandemic as a decision was taken not to conduct the survey in 2020 as it may have provided a false picture of the quantum of caravan and camping within Gower, as many campsites only opened for vehicles that had self-contained toilet/ washing facilities, whilst some did not open.

The Review is building on the existing Study and will involve the following key stages:

Stage 1: A broad assessment of each Landscape Character Area identified in the Study to ascertain whether the identified landscape capacity remains valid. This includes consideration of 'newer' types of accommodation that are likely to remain on site all year around, but may have less landscape impact than other types of non-operational development such as a static caravan, cabin or lodge. The review follows the 2014 assessment and takes into consideration the scope for mitigation measures in relation to each LCA as a whole. Fixed point monitoring locations identified within the Study have been revisited in order to show any changes in the landscape.

Stage 2: Building on Stage 1 by providing more detailed evaluation for LCAs identified as having capacity for additional caravan and campsite provision without general detriment to their landscape character. Consideration of different design and landscape mitigation solutions in LCAs with different landscape /seascape character.

Progress so Far

Field visits were undertaken in March and August 2021. A preliminary Stage 1 report has been submitted to the Council for review and the consultants are in the early stages of progressing Stage 2.

Next Steps and Way Forward

The preliminary Stage 2 report is due early 2022.

It is anticipated that the Study will be used as an evidence base document in order to inform the LDP.

Elements of the Study may be taken forward as part of the Placemaking Guidance for Caravan and Campsites which is due to be prepared alongside the Study review. The Guidance would cover the whole County, not just the AONB. Following appropriate public consultation, it is anticipated that the Placemaking Guidance will be adopted as SPG to the LDP.

Points to remember:

- The Study is the starting point when considering the landscape impact of new tourism accommodation within the AONB. Issues such as highway infrastructure, residential amenity, drainage, lighting etc all have to be taken into account too.
- Little planning controls exist over existing sites, particularly in terms of design and layouts, particularly those that gained planning consent via the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, 1960.

Agenda Item 7a



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 6 December 2021

Sustainable Development Fund – Financial Summary

For Information

Sustainable Development Fund – Financial Summary

Welsh Government have confirmed the SDF budget for 2021/22 at £100,000.

15 projects have been approved, with £100,000 committed, fully committing the funds for 2020/21.

The Committed Funds figure includes the CCS Management Fee of £7,500.55.

Total Funds available	£100,000
Committed Funds	£100,000
Uncommitted Funds	£0
Applications in progress	£0

Mike Scott,

26 November 2021

Agenda Item 7b



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 6 December 2021

Proposed Changes to Election Process for SDF Panel Members

For Information

Welsh Government have requested changes to the way the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants panels are appointed, which are aimed at ensuring that the panels consist of a diverse demographic of members, with representation from the AONB Partnership.

To accommodate this, we will amend the process that we use to appoint members of the SDF Grant Panel, and the SDF Appeals Panel. To meet the Welsh Government's guidance, we will ask the steering group to appoint two members of each panel each year, for a term of two years.

This will enable us to have a rolling appointment process, keeping the skills built up by the panel membership, while also introducing new members of the panel.

I will also run annual introductions to the work of the SDF grants panel, as part of the established programme of meetings.

The steering group will be asked to nominate potential panel members, so that they can be appointed at the spring steering group meeting.

The Council's legal advisors have confirmed that a change to the Terms of Reference of the AONB Partnership are not required to accommodate this.

Mike Scott,

26th November 2021



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 6 December 2021

Proposed Landscape & Biodiversity Grant Scheme

For Information

1. Aim of Scheme

This grant scheme, run as a subsidiary of the Sustainable Development Fund and managed locally on behalf of Welsh Government, aims to support a range of landscape and biodiversity enhancement initiatives within Gower AONB.

The grant is aimed at landowners, Community Councils and community spaces, where biodiversity gains can engage and benefit those who live within the local community. Farmers can apply for funding, however, they must not be in receipt of an agri-environment grant for the same scheme. Priority will be given to schemes where there is greatest biodiversity gain and community benefit can be demonstrated.

2. Range of Activity

The scheme will provide grant support for the following activities:

- a) Drystone Walls
- b) Hedge Laying and Planting
- c) Small Woodland Creation
- d) Coppicing
- e) Fencing of Riparian Habitats
- f) Orchard Creation and Restoration
- g) Natural Flood Management
- h) Pond Creation
- i) Wildflower Meadow Restoration
- j) Community Wildflower Corridor Creation
- k) Small Historical Features

A series of guidance notes set out what standards apply, and where you can find additional information and advice.

3. Eligibility

Applications will be welcomed from (or on behalf of) landowners, and community groups working in partnership with landowners.

However, grants cannot be given where the work or site:

- a) is already under another funded management scheme (e.g. Glastir, Section 39 or Section 106 Agreements, SSSI agreement)
- b) forms part of a managed garden or curtilage of a residential dwelling or business
- c) does not have the correct consents in place
- d) has already started on the project
- e) is receiving support or grant from any other Welsh Government or Exchequer fund.

4. Funding

Grants are available of up to £3,000, at up to 50% funding. Match funding can include in-kind staff/volunteer time of up to 25%.

5. Application Process

A simple application form will be used to apply for funding describe your scheme, and be sure to include a detailed location plan, which must include a full six-figure Ordnance Survey grid reference. Please ensure the plan shows the location of any public highways, bridleways or footpaths as public visibility will help support an application.

Copies of old maps showing woods, orchards, hedgerows, walls, etc. and information on the history of a farm, wood, or orchard will help support an application. 'Before' photographs are also appreciated (electronic copies preferred).

You should already know about any designations on the land (Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument, bat roost etc.), but the AONB Team may be able to help you check. You should also check for any outstanding charges against the land from planning conditions, other grant schemes etc. Any designations/charges must be stated in the application. Failure to reveal such details may render your application invalid.

The application can be developed with advice and support from the AONB Team. A site visit is likely to be needed, so that the initial project can be discussed in detail, and that future management can be planned. A maintenance period of 10 years will be expected, and a simple management plan will be required as part of the application.

Applications can be submitted at any time, although please be aware that funds may become increasingly committed.

Mike Scott,
30 November 2021