



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 14 March 2022 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

Councillors

P R Hood-Williams	L James	A H Stevens
M Thomas		

Steering Group Members

R Button	J France	G Howe
P Jenkins	H Osborn	B Parry

Officer(s)

Chris Lindley	Gower AONB Team Leader
Mike Scott	Gower AONB Officer
Jeremy Parkhouse	Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillors: M C Child
Steering Group Members: S Heard and D P Tucker

27 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.

28 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 6 December 2021 be approved as a correct record.

29 Discussion - Gower Commons, Livestock Road Casualties.

Roger Button highlighted for discussion the number of livestock casualties on Gower Commons.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- The large amount of road kill on the commons and the need to possibly introduce fencing and reduce traffic speed;
- The speed signs erected by volunteers being damaged by recent storms;

- Introduction of physical and electronic fencing to prevent livestock roaming onto roads;
- Cross-Party Group which discusses issues on the commons which is also attended by the Police, Commoners, Gower Commons Safety Group and how the traffic speed had been reduced from 60 mph to 40 mph;
- Whether it was legal to fence off sections of common land, how locals would respond and the difficulty is siting Go Safe speed cameras at appropriate places on the commons;
- Recognising that speed of traffic was the common factor and was a safety issue which needed addressing;
- Collection of relevant statistics regarding accidents involving livestock, over 100 animals being killed in the last year and how many accidents were not being reported to the Police;
- The need for livestock to remain on the commons in order to manage the land;
- The various solutions that had been considered and how other areas were experiencing similar situations;
- The difficulties in getting the Go Safe Speed Van to attend areas on Gower, e.g. outside schools;
- The loss of livestock and the costs to farmers / owners;
- How the commons roads encouraged fast driving and the potential need to look at radical solutions;
- How much of the speeding traffic was driven by Gower residents.

Hamish Osborn offered his services to assist with finding future solutions.

Resolved that the contents of the discussions be noted.

30 Dark Sky Community Award Application - Update.

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader provided an update report on the Dark Sky Community Award Application.

Reference was made to a previous update provided in March 2021 and it was explained that the 'Placemaking Guidance for the Gower AONB' was now approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Swansea Council's Planning Committee. Gower AONB team could now complete the International Dark Sky Community application to the IDA. Relevant activities since New Year 2022 included: -

- Renewed discussions with IDA representatives regarding completion of the application to their revised 2018 Guidelines for International Dark Sky Communities.
- Completion of the annual sky quality monitoring, undertaken at the end of January, with further fieldwork in early March. The monitoring report was still to be completed.
- Participation in the first Welsh Dark Skies Week (19-27 February) with all the Welsh National Parks and AONB's delivering a programme of online and live events.
- An ongoing programme of converting street lighting within Gower AONB to LED Dark Sky friendly units by Swansea Council Highways Lighting team.

Gower AONB Team would complete drafting of the final application with the working group for submission to the IDA as soon as possible. There would be a further update at the Gower AONB Annual Forum.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- Concern regarding the potential impact of two proposed large attendance events on Gower, how they were two separate events and details of the discussions which had taken place with the organisers;
- The difficulties with managing lights on private houses / private property and how education was the preferred method of dealing with matters.

Resolved that the contents of the presentation be noted.

31 AONB Grants 2022/23 Report.

The Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report which provided a summary of the current principal grants supporting the AONB and a forward look into the next financial year.

Details of the following grants were provided: -

- Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) – The history and background were outlined. It was explained that this grant was provided by Welsh Government and the £100k budget in both 2020/21 and 2021/22 was fully spent/committed.

Subject to finalisation / confirmation of the Welsh Government budget, it was anticipated that the SDF would continue into 2022/23, although no figure had been agreed.

- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Partnership Grant – The history and background were provided. It was detailed that this grant had been typically in a multi-year offer, although the current grant was a single year offer of around £68k, plus further capital funding (£40k) for specific biodiversity projects through the NRW Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Fund.

Discussions were ongoing with NRW regarding their support for the AONB. Again, any offer would be subject to confirmation of Welsh Government budgets, but it was understood that NRW were considering offering a two-year programme offer.

- Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) - The SLSP programme of capital investment across Wales's eight Designated Landscapes ensured that they could contribute to key Welsh Government objectives. The four main programme strands were detailed.

Project proposals, including collaborative projects were brought forward by the designated landscapes and allocated funding from Welsh Government via the

Tirweddau Cymru - Landscapes Wales partnership. The Gower AONB SLSP grant was £185k in 2020/21 and £225k in 2021/22.

Subject to finalisation / confirmation of the Welsh Government budget, we were anticipating that the SLSP would continue into 2022/23 and would potentially be a multi-year allocation, although no budget figure had been agreed.

- Welsh Government Revenue Grant - Welsh Government offered a one-off revenue grant of £75k for Gower AONB for 2021/22. The grant enabled the recruitment of the Gower AONB Communities and Nature Project Officer on a fixed-term basis (to end of March 2022).

It was understood that Welsh Government were proposing to allocate further revenue funding for each AONB in Wales in 2022-23, with indicative allocations for the next two financial years. The allocation was to address capacity issues within AONB teams in ramping up work on biodiversity, decarbonisation, community resilience and sustainable tourism.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

32 Tourism Sub-Group Update.

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided a progress update report regarding the Tourism Sub-Group.

It was stated that at the December 2021 meeting it was "noted that the Gower AONB Tourism Pressures Working Group had met for preliminary discussions on 22 November 2021. Officers would be contacting stakeholders to provide examples for an action log and the Working Group would meet to discuss the findings in the New Year."

It was added that the Sub-group had met on 31 January 2022 and initiated the preparation of the issues log for further development and completion. Key issues noted included:

- Overnight parking
- Management of major events
- Dogs under poor control
- High traffic volumes
- Highway safety

The Gower AONB Team Leader further added that he would continue to work on the issues log with Sub-Group members and would report back to the AONB Partnership in due course.

Hamish Osborn, Natural Resources Wales offered his support to the Sub-Group to assist with the outputs.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

33 Sustainable Development Fund (SDF).

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 2022/22 at £100,000.

15 projects had been approved, with £100,000 committed, fully committing the funds for 2021/22.

The Committed Funds figure included the CCS Management Fee of £10,000.

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

A detailed report would be produced after April and circulated to Steering Group members, highlighting the work done by the projects the Fund has supported.

The SDF budget for 2022/23 had not yet been confirmed by Welsh Government, but indications were that it would be in excess of £50,000.

A new SDF Grants Panel would be appointed following the Annual Forum meeting of the Gower AONB Partnership in July 2022.

34 Gower Landscape & Biodiversity Grant Scheme.

The Gower AONB Officer presented an update report regarding the Gower Landscape & Biodiversity Grant Scheme.

It was outlined that this grant scheme, which would be a subsidiary of the Sustainable Development Fund, and would be managed locally on behalf of Welsh Government, aimed to support a range of landscape and biodiversity enhancement initiatives within Gower AONB.

The grant would be aimed at landowners, Community Councils and other groups, to encourage and support projects where biodiversity gains could engage and benefit those who lived within the local community. Priority would be given to schemes where there was greatest biodiversity gain, and where community benefit could be demonstrated.

The scheme would provide grant support for the following activities:

- Drystone Walls
- Hedge Laying and Planting
- Small Woodland Creation

- Coppicing
- Orchard Creation and Restoration
- Pond Creation
- Wildflower Meadow Restoration
- Community Wildflower Corridor Creation
- Small Historic Features

A series of guidance notes would set out what standards and conditions applied and where to find additional information and advice.

Grants would be up to £3,000, at up to 50% funding and eligible costs could include labour, materials, survey work and management plans. It was expected to start inviting applications in April 2022.

A simple application form would be used to apply for funding, with advice and support from the AONB Team. A maintenance period of 10 years would be expected, and a simple management plan would be required as part of the application.

The scheme would run as a pilot in 2022/23, so that it could be reviewed and any amendments made to improve the outcomes in following years.

Copies of the scheme documentation would be distributed to the SDF Grant Panel members, and the members of the AONB Steering Group.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

35 Tirweddau Cymru - Landscapes Wales Update.

The Gower AONB Team Leader presented an update report on Tirweddau Cymru – Landscapes Wales.

It was explained that Tirweddau Cymru-Landscapes Wales (TC-LW) is the partnership of the designated landscapes in Wales who were working together to address key shared challenges, including action on the climate change and nature emergencies.

The TC-LW partnership included the five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the three Welsh National Park Authorities. As well as connecting landscape bodies to key Welsh Government policy areas and NRW strategic issues, the aims and remit of the partnership included:

- Connecting landscape bodies to work together on key challenges.
- Administering the Sustainable Land Sustainable Places (SLSP) fund, a capital investment fund split across each landscape, with funding for collaborative projects across multiple landscapes.

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Cont'd

Tirweddau Cymru Landscape Wales administration of the SLSP programme had already provided over £8 million to support more than 90 projects across the Welsh Designated Landscapes.

Following the online autumn seminar in October 2021, preparations were beginning for an in-person seminar for AONB Partnership and National Park members and other stakeholders in the autumn at a venue in the Gower area.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 2.50 pm

Chair