



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, 14 March 2022

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/36Lc7gm>

Agenda

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Next Meeting: To Be Confirmed.

Huw Evans

Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Monday, 7 March 2022

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, 6 December 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

Councillors

M C Child

P R Hood-Williams

L James

M Thomas

Steering Group Members

J France

S Heard

G Howe

P Jenkins

H Osborn

B Parry

P Thornton

Officer(s)

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

Mike Scott

Gower AONB Officer

Jeremy Parkhouse

Democratic Services Officer

Deb Hill

Nature Conservation Team Leader

Ruth Henderson

Senior Planning Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillors: A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: R Button and D P Tucker

19 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.

20 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 4 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

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.

21 **Mass Participation Events.**

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report which responded to the previous concerns raised by the Steering Group regarding the potential impacts of mass participation events on Gower AONB. The report outlined the current context and sought the views of the Steering Group.

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

The opportunities to showcase the landscape, its wildlife and culture was highlighted along with the financial opportunities for local businesses and the health and well-being benefits are those participating.

The potential negative impacts were also outlined and reference was made to the Chartered Institute of Fundraising published guidance on how to run outdoor challenge events in the UK. The guidance highlighted 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 the effect. It further highlighted how the impact on local residents, roads, other users, facilities, footpaths, wildlife and the wider landscape could be damaging, and could damage an organisation's reputation if the event failed to take steps to minimise their effect.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- The effect of the ironman event upon the Gower Show in August 2022;
- Policies of National Parks / AONB's dealing with such events and the cumulative impact / frequency of the events;
- The lack of co-ordination / notification being provided by event organisers;
- Defining when events become mass participation events;
- The need for a central point of registration for events and monitoring how events were organised / whether companies followed the correct procedures;
- How some events are privately organised for financial gain;
- Organisers utilising the National Association of Fundraisers who have a code of conduct for organisations to follow;
- The need to consult with Swansea Council's Special Events Team regarding the best way forward;
- The need for events to be run in an environmentally sustainable way.

Resolved that the contents of the report / discussions be noted and an update be provided at the next scheduled meeting.

22 Clyne Valley Country Park.

Barbara Parry presented a report on Clyne Valley Country Park which outlined the background, aims, role and work of the Clyne Valley Community Project.

It was outlined that the 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 agreed 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 had:

- 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.

It was added that this beautiful green valley, 3 miles from the centre of Swansea, had 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 had recently taken responsibility for the Country Park, CVCP had worked closely with them in planning and implementing improvements in the Valley and this partnership had continued with more developments to come. The AONB team would be preparing a Management Plan for the Valley and this month Chris Lindley and Ursula Jones provided a presentation to CVCP members on the 'Future of Clyne Valley', explaining the process they were following to construct a Management Plan.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- the excellent work and input of CVCP;
- the need for more resources / co-ordination to be provided with the introduction of / to support the management plan in order to protect the park as it is a primary asset;
- future monitoring of the management plan by the Steering Group;
- how Parks do not manage the park as it is historically managed by another department of the Council;
- the Council / NRW supporting the work of the volunteers through partnership working;
- the need to preserve and enjoy the park.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

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

Ruth Henderson, Senior Planning Officer presented a 'for information' report which provided a review of the Gower Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study for Caravan and Camping Sites 2014.

The background to the Study was provided and it was outlined that the Study had proved a useful tool in guiding new tourism development to less conspicuous locations where the detrimental impact on the designated landscape and seascape was minimised.

It was added that an update of the Study was required 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.

Furthermore, the introduction and popularity of alternative forms of accommodation since the 2014 Study such as pods, lodges, shipping containers and other forms of non-operational development were becoming much more popular as forms of holiday accommodation and should be considered.

John Champion Associates had been commissioned by Swansea Council to undertake the review, which had been part funded by AONB Grant monies from NRW. The review was building on the existing study and would involve a two-stage process.

It was explained that field visits were undertaken in March and August 2021 and a preliminary Stage 1 report had been submitted to the Council for review and the consultants were in the early stages of progressing Stage 2, which was due early in 2022. It was anticipated that the Study would be used as an evidence base document in order to inform the LDP.

The Steering Group commented upon the number of huts, yurts, tents, shepherd huts and extensions had been erected / built without planning permission and the need for the system to be respected. Sewage problems relating to such

developments were also causing issues on Gower. The Steering Group was advised to report such issues to planning enforcement.

24 Sustainable Development Fund - Financial Report.

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.

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

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

25 Proposed Changes to Election Process for SDF Panel Members.

The Gower AONB Officer updated the Steering Group regarding the amendments being introduced by Welsh Government to the process of appointing to the Sustainable Development Fund Grant Panel.

It was added that the changes were aimed at ensuring that panels consisted of a diverse demographic of members, with representation from the AONB Partnership.

To accommodate this, the process would be amended to appoint members of the SDF Grant Panel, and the SDF Appeals Panel. To meet the Welsh Government's guidance, the Steering Group would be requested to appoint two members of each panel each year, for a term of two years. This 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 Steering Group would be asked to nominate potential panel members to be appointed at the March 2022 Steering Group meeting.

It was noted that the Council's legal advisors had confirmed that a change to the Terms of Reference of the AONB Partnership were not required to accommodate the amendments.

26 Proposed Landscape & Biodiversity Grant Scheme.

The Gower AONB Officer presented a 'for information' report regarding the proposed landscape and biodiversity grant scheme.

It was explained that the grant scheme, run as a subsidiary of the Sustainable Development Fund and managed locally on behalf of Welsh Government, aimed 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 could engage and benefit those who live within the local community. Farmers could apply for funding but must not be in receipt of an agri-environment grant for the same scheme. Priority would be given to schemes where the greatest biodiversity gain and community benefit could be demonstrated.

The range of activity, eligibility, funding and application process were also explained.

The Steering Group discussed the specific funding available, the inclusion of schemes addressing climate change and how the scheme had different outputs to Sustainable Development funding.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 5



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 14 March 2022

Gower Dark Sky Community Award Application - Update

The Steering Group were last briefed on this at the March 2021 meeting, which was minuted as: -

'The Gower AONB Team Leader reported that as part of Gower AONB's pending application for Dark Sky Community Award with the International Dark Sky Association (IDA), it was required to undertake annual monitoring of sky quality within the AONB.

The latest of these was undertaken on the evening of 9 January 2021. The survey period was moonless and was for the most part cold and clear with excellent visibility, with only light cloud early on during the first part of the survey. Sky Quality Meters (SQMs) were used to collect readings at 42 locations across Gower. SQM readings were converted to Naked Eye Limiting Magnitude (NELM) for ease of understanding. Annex 1 provided a summary table of results from 2019-2021 for comparison.

It was explained that the 2021 results for Gower appeared broadly comparable with the results of previous years. Locations furthest west, further from Swansea and less-populated, were consistent in producing the best readings. Readings at monitoring points from Bracelet Bay westward along south Gower, were all poorer than in previous years, but with no apparent cause. Monitoring in 2022 would consider this further.

It was added that these monitoring reports would form part of the Gower AONB formal application to the IDA for the Dark Sky Community Award, which was pending whilst the revision of Gower AONB Design Guide was completed and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The Steering Group queried the slow progress and it was explained that the Council had to follow the correct procedures, including consultation. It was added that improvement works were ongoing, particularly in relation to street lighting and an improvement plan was in place.'

The 'Placemaking Guidance for the Gower AONB' is now approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Swansea Council's Planning Committee. Gower AONB team can now complete the International Dark Sky Community application to the IDA. Relevant activities since New Year 2022 include:

- 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 - but the monitoring report is still to be completed
- Participation in the first Welsh Dark Skies Week (19-27 February) – with all the Welsh National Parks and AONBs delivering a programme of online and live events:
[Welsh Dark Skies Week \(discoveryinthedark.wales\)](https://discoveryinthedark.wales)
- 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 will complete drafting of the final application with the working group for submission to the IDA as soon as possible. There will be a further update for the Gower AONB Annual Forum.

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

7 March 2022

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 14 March 2022

AONB Grants 2022/23 Report

Swansea Council receives a number of grants for activities and projects that contribute toward the delivery of the Gower AONB Management Plan. This paper gives the AONB Steering Group a quick summary of the current principal grants supporting the AONB and a forward look into the next financial year.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) – Established in 2001, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) supports innovative, sustainable projects in Wales's five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The Fund is divided equally between the five AONBs. The SDF supports projects that work to enhance and conserve natural beauty, wildlife, culture, landscape, land use and community within the context of the goals and sustainable development principles in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and the priorities set out in Valued and Resilient: the Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks.

This grant is 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, we are anticipating that the SDF will continue into 2022/23, although no figure has been agreed.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) partnership grant – NRW has provided a grant aid programme to Welsh AONBS since it was created in 2013. This grant typically supports the work of the AONB, Countryside Access and Nature Conservation Teams as well as planning policy work in the AONB.

This grant has been typically in a multi-year offer, although the current grant is a single year offer of c.£68k plus further capital funding for specific biodiversity projects through the NRW Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Fund.

Discussions are ongoing with NRW regarding their support for the AONB. Again, any offer will be subject to confirmation of Welsh Government budgets, but we understand that NRW are considering offering a two-year programme offer.

Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) – The SLSP programme of capital investment across Wales's eight Designated Landscapes ensures that they can contribute to key Welsh Government objectives. The programme has four main strands:

- Decarbonisation – through decarbonisation of Authority activity and assets, schemes to enable decarbonisation in communities including appropriate renewable energy, and carbon sequestration schemes in the landscape
- Nature-based solutions and nature recovery - including projects that improve connectivity and resilience of ecosystems in designated areas being mindful of climate change adaptation
- Sustainable tourism - including improving visitor facilities and infrastructure, helping landscapes recover from the impact of tourism, prepare for changing tourism patterns following Covid, and improve and protect valued cultural and heritage assets.
- Supporting communities to respond to COVID and promote a Green Recovery - enabling designated landscape bodies to assist local communities to deal with the impacts of COVID and undertake activities focused on a Green Recovery.

Project proposals – including collaborative projects - are 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 2021/2.

Subject to finalisation/confirmation of the Welsh Government budget, we are anticipating that the SLSP will continue into 2022/23 – and will potentially be a multi-year allocation - although no budget figure has 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). We understand that Welsh Government are 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 is to address capacity issues within AONB teams in ramping up work on biodiversity, decarbonisation, community resilience and sustainable tourism.

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

7 March 2022

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader
Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 14 March 2022
Tourism Sub-Group Update

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.”

The Sub-group met on 31 January and initiated the preparation of the issues log for further development and completion. Key issues noted include:

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

Gower AONB Team Leader will continue to work on the issues log with sub-group members for reporting back to the AONB Partnership in due course.

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

7 March 2022

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 14 March 2022

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

For Information

Sustainable Development Fund – Financial Summary

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

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

The Committed Funds figure includes 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 will be produced after April, and circulated to Steering Group members, highlighting the work done by the projects we have supported.

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

A new SDF Grants Panel will be appointed following the annual forum meeting of the Gower AONB Partnership in June 2022.

Mike Scott,
4th March 2022



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 14 March 2022

Gower Landscape & Biodiversity Grant Scheme

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

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

The scheme will 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 will set out what standards and conditions apply, and where you can find additional information and advice.

Grants will be up to £3,000, at up to 50% funding and eligible costs can include labour, materials, survey work and management plans. We expect to start inviting applications in April 2022.

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

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

Copies of the scheme documentation will be distributed to the SDF Grant Panel members, and the members of the AONB Steering Group – comments and suggestions will be welcome.

Mike Scott,
4th March 2022

Agenda Item 10



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 14 March 2022

Tirweddau Cymru – Landscapes Wales - Update

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

The TC-LW partnership includes 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 include:

- 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.

Tirweddau Cymru Landscape Wales administration of the SLSP programme has 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 are 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.

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

7 March 2022