



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Gower AONB Advisory Group

At: Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

On: Monday, 25 September 2023

Time: 6.30 pm

Chair: Councillor Paul Lloyd

Membership:

Councillors: P R Hood-Williams, L James, S E Keeton, N L Matthews and A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: Howard Evans, Stephen Heard, Carrie Townsend Jones, Alan Kearsley-Evans, Peter Lanfear, Philip Ogleby, Hamish Osborn, Barbara Parry, Clive Scott and Paul Tucker

Agenda

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1 Apologies for Absence.	
2 Declarations of Interest. www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests	
3 To approve & sign the Minutes of the previous meeting(s) as a correct record.	1 - 4
4 NAAONB Annual National Conference. (Verbal) (Mike Scott / Clive Scott)	
5 NAAONB Branding. (Verbal) (Mike Scott)	
6 Replacement Local Development Plan. (Verbal) (Mike Scott)	
7 Gower AONB Team Report. (Mike Scott / Ursula Jones / Paul Meller)	5 - 6
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**10 Future Meeting Format - Discussion of format of future meetings.
(Verbal) (Mike Scott)**

Next Meeting: Monday, 26 February 2024 at 6.30 pm

Huw Evans

**Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
19 September 2023**

Contact: Democratic Services: - 636923

Agenda Item 3



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Gower AONB Advisory Group**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Monday, 26 June 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

Councillors

P R Hood-Williams

L James

N L Matthews

Steering Group Members

Howard Evans

Hamish Osborn

Barbara Parry

Clive Scott

Paul Tucker

Also Present

Hannah Bowden

Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Society

Officer(s)

Paul Meller

Natural Environment Section Manager

Jeremy Parkhouse

Democratic Services Officer

Mike Scott

Gower AONB Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillors: S E Keeton and A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: Stephen Heard, Carrie Townsend Jones and Alan Kearsley-Evans

1 Election of Vice-Chair for the 2023-2024 Municipal year.

Resolved that Barbara Parry be elected Vice-Chair of the Advisory Group for the 2023-2024 Municipal year.

2 Declarations of Interest.

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

3 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Gower AONB Advisory Group Meeting held on 15 February 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

4 Gower AONB Team Report.

Paul Meller, Natural Environment Manager, Mike Scott, Gower AONB Officer and Ursula Jones, Communities and Nature Project Officer presented a 'for information' update report on the following: -

- Gower Show – The Gower AONB Partnership would have a marquee as usual, hosting a number of partners.
- Gower Dark Sky Community Application – a draft application for “Dark Sky Community” status was submitted in January and a response was awaited from the International Dark Sky Committee. The application had been acknowledged, and a newly appointed project officer had been in communication.
- Gower Dark Sky – Retro Fit Projects – Ty Rhossili had been surveyed and lighting upgraded to meet the requirements of the building’s use as well as adhering to dark sky standards. The Wales-wide collaborative project was underway, with lighting consultants Ridge having surveyed Gower AONB. A report with recommendations for lighting improvements and estimated costings would be provided in the coming months.
- Port Eynon Bay Dunes – work was being planned for September and no comments had been received from the Community Councils.
- Fairwood Common – Work to install a new water connection at Moor Lakes was completed in March 2023, providing drinking water for stock grazing the Common. Dormouse surveys were being undertaken to ascertain their presence in suitable habitat on the Common.
- Pennard Castle – Interpretation panels were installed in 2022 and 2023. Stage 1 of the ivy removal works were underway, rare plant seed had been collected and grown on at Celtic Wildflower Nurseries, and a Scheduled Monument Consent application had been made. A contractor was in place to undertake investigative works so that a tender document for Stage 2 of the works (ivy removal & some restoration work) could be drawn up for bidding contractors.
- Gower Places of Worship – Initial surveys of twelve churches were completed in 2022. The implementation of some recommendations had commenced. New tower doors had been installed at Oxwich and Llanrhidian to allow continued access by roosting bats. Specialist surveys for bats and swift boxes were underway for several churches.
- Clyne Valley Country Park – Following a site visit with Corporate Building Services, stabilisation work would start this autumn on the Ivy Tower. Work was also being planned on the main buildings of the Clyne Woods Arsenic Works, following an environmental survey. A planning application had been submitted for

replacement signage at Blackpill. Work to make the buildings at New Mill Farm safe was underway.

Biodiversity interpretation and a nature trail were installed in 2022. A second round of Japanese knotweed treatment was scheduled for autumn 2023. The Council was working with Natural Resources Wales on a survey of Clyne River to determine what restoration and flood mitigation measures could be implemented with the help of CVCP.

- Parkmill Japanese Knotweed – A third year of treatment was scheduled for autumn 2023. A survey in spring 2024 would determine the need for any further treatment.
- SDF Panel – The dates of the SDF Grant Panel had been confirmed for 2023/24 (30 June, 22 September, 8 December and 15 March 2024).
- AONB Advisory Group – The dates for the Advisory Group had been confirmed for 2023/24 (26 June, 25 September and 26 February 2024).
- NAAONB Rebrand – The National Association of AONB's was discussing a significant rebrand to address some of the issues raised in the Marsden Report – mainly around inclusion and working with under-represented communities, better communications, providing a more unified image, seeking to achieve a higher profile, and greater recognition of their contribution to nature recovery and climate change agendas.
- AONB Team Staffing – An “AONB Nature and Communities Officer” post was being advertised, which would provide a third member of staff within the AONB team, enabling more project work to be carried out. Work on restructuring the Natural Environment Section was continuing.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report.

5 Road and Village Signage.

Howard Evans, Gower Society highlighted the number and variety of road signs throughout Gower. He circulated a number of examples of the signage to the Group, which emphasised the lack of consistency of content, differences in style / design and in some cases, poor positioning which impacted upon visibility.

The Group discussed the options available to progress the issue, highways / planning matters, enforcement.

It was proposed that Highways be given the opportunity to respond to the issues raised.

Resolved that: -

- 1) Highways be given the opportunity to respond to the issues raised.
- 2) The issue be discussed further at the next meeting.

6 Sustainable Development Fund - Financial Summary.

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

It was noted that the £100,000 SDF budget for 2022/23, was fully spent and a total of 19 projects had been supported.

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

It was added that a detailed report would be produced over the summer and circulated to the Steering Group, highlighting the work done by the projects which had been supported.

In addition, the SDF budget of £100,000 for 2023/24 had been confirmed by Welsh Government. To date, 14 projects had funding committed, with a further 4 applications in progress.

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

Total Funds available	£100,000
Committed Funds	£53,173
Uncommitted Funds	£46,827
Applications in progress	£30,616

It was confirmed that the next meeting of the SDF Grants Panel would be held on 30 June 2023.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Natural Environment Manager

Gower AONB Advisory Group – 25 September 2023

Gower AONB Team Report

AONB team members will provide verbal updates on the following:

Gower Show – the Gower show was cancelled on the afternoon before the show, due to high winds. Following the show, the AONB Team will review the display and interpretative/promotional material used by the team. This will be carried out over the winter, with the intention of having materials ready for the spring.

Gower Dark Sky Community Application – a draft application for “Dark Sky Community” status was submitted in January, and a response from newly appointed project officer has been received, with comments on the draft application. An amended application is to be submitted.

Gower Dark Sky – Retro Fit Projects – The Wales-wide collaborative project is underway with lighting consultants Ridge having surveyed Gower AONB and a report with recommendations for lighting improvements and estimated costings has been provided. Ridge identified 25 sites with potential for lighting retrofitting. Up to seven of these will have a detailed lighting survey undertaken in the coming months with a view to retrofit them. Three of these sites are having a before and after snapshot of bat activity to see if the lighting improvements have had an impact.

Port Eynon Bay Dunes – work is being planned for September. No comments have been received from the Community Councils.

Built Heritage – small projects to stabilise historical structures are planned or underway at St Marys Church, Knelston, Backingstone Chapel and Llanmadoc Pig Sty.

Fairwood Common – A meeting was held with NRW to discuss future working. The Commoners are to meet at the end of September to discuss how best to coordinate future working. Dormouse surveys are being undertaken to ascertain their presence in suitable habitat on the Common.

Pennard Castle – Interpretation panels were installed in 2022 & 2023. Stage 1 of the ivy removal works is complete – rare plant seed has been collected and grown on at Celtic Wildflower Nurseries, a Scheduled Monument Consent has been granted and the investigative work has been undertaken. Using the results from the investigative work, a tender document for Stage 2 of the works (ivy removal & some restoration work) will be drawn up for bidding contractors. It is anticipated Stage 2 will commence early 2024.

Gower Places of Worship – Initial surveys of twelve churches completed in 2022. Implementation of some recommendations is underway – new tower doors at Oxwich and Llanrhidian to allow continued access by roosting bats. Specialist surveys for bats and swift boxes are complete for several churches. Bespoke swift boxes have been made for two churches to allow them to be fitted without the need to screw into the fabric of the churches. Replacement ladders and loft hatches will be fitted at a few churches to allow safe and easy access for building and wildlife surveys and monitoring. Engagement with two churches on altering the mowing regime of the grounds to improve floristic diversity is underway.

Clyne Valley Country Park – Following a site visit with Corporate Building Services, stabilisation work will start this autumn on the Ivy Tower. Work is also being planned on the main buildings of the Clyne Woods Arsenic Works, following an environmental survey. Replacement signage at Blackpill is planned for October. Work to make the buildings at New Mill Farm safe is underway. Following vandalism, 6 picnic benches have been recovered from the fishing pond.

Biodiversity interpretation and a nature trail installed 2022. A second round of Japanese knotweed treatment scheduled for autumn 2023.

Parkmill Japanese Knotweed – A third year of treatment is partially complete for autumn 2023. A survey in spring 2024 will determine the need for any further treatment.

SDF Panel – dates of the grant panel have been confirmed for 2023/24 (22nd September, 8th December, 15th March 2024). A financial summary is provided separately.

AONB Advisory Group – dates for the Advisory Group have been confirmed for 2023/24 (25th September, 26th February 2024).

NAAONB Rebrand – the National Association of AONBs is discussing a significant rebrand to address some of the issues raised in the Glover Review – mainly around inclusion and working with under-represented communities, better communications, providing a more unified image, seeking to achieve a higher profile, and greater recognition of their contribution to nature recovery and climate change agendas.

AONB Team Staffing – an “AONB Nature And Communities Officer” will be starting in October, as a third member of staff within the AONB team, enabling more project work to be carried out. Work on restructuring the Natural Environment Section is continuing.

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Advisory Group – 25 September 2023

Sustainable Development Fund – Financial Report

For Information

Sustainable Development Fund – Financial Summary

The SDF budget of £100,000 for 2023/24 has been confirmed by Welsh Government.

So far 18 projects have funding committed, with a further 4 applications in progress at present. One project has reported that they are unable to go ahead, and funds have been returned, with a second unlikely to proceed.

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

Total Funds available	£100,000
Committed Funds	£79,932.10
Uncommitted Funds	£23,067.90
Applications in progress	£20,100

The next meetings of the SDF Grants Panel will be 8th December and 15th March 2024

Mike Scott,
14th September 2023

Agenda Item 9



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Advisory Group – 25 September 2023

Gower AONB Advisory Group – Changes to Membership

Since the previous meeting Anthony Thomas has resigned from the group, leaving a vacancy on the AONB Advisory Group.

Currently, the Advisory Group does not have an archaeological voice. For the past 6 months, Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust have had an observer sitting on the group – Judith Doyle, who is the Stewardship Officer, as well as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

I feel that it would strengthen the groups breadth of skills if Judith Doyle were co-opted on to the group. She would bring not only her professional knowledge to the group, but also her local knowledge of Gower. She would formally represent GGAT, and the archaeological/heritage interest, on the group.

Alternatively, the group could seek a wider nomination to fill the vacancy.

Mike Scott,
18 September 2023