



City and County of Swansea

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

Reynoldston Village Hall - Church Meadow, Reynoldston,  
Gower, Swansea

Monday, 2 December 2019 at 7.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

### **Councillors**

L James

### **Steering Group Members**

J France

S Heard

S Hill

G Howe

P Jenkins

H Osborn

B Parry

P Thornton

D P Tucker

### **Officer(s)**

Paul Meller

Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Manager

Mike Scott

Gower AONB Officer

Jeremy Parkhouse

Democratic Services Officer

Chris Dale

Countryside Access Team Leader (Rights of Way)

### **Also Present**

Ian Button, Justin Davies, John Marson

### **Apologies for Absence**

Councillors: M C Child, J P Curtice, P R Hood-Williams and A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: R Button and J Chambers

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## **26 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.

## **27 Minutes.**

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Gower AONB Partnership Annual Meeting held on 23 September 2019 be approved as a correct record.

## **28 Matters Arising from the Minutes.**

None.

**29 Gower Dark Sky Community Application - Update.**

The Gower AONB Officer presented an update report on behalf of the Gower AONB Team Leader regarding the Gower Dark Sky Community Application.

It was explained that there was one remaining issue that was going to take further time to resolve with the International DarkSky Association (IDA). In summary, the issue was around having safeguards in planning guidance concerning the 'colour temperature' of development lighting on Gower. The IDA was seeking thresholds of 3000kelvin in the AONB. 3000kelvin was described as a 'warm-white' colour, and the threshold would limit blue-spectrum light that was linked with impacts on human health and wildlife.

The proposed approach provided was not accepted by IDA who wanted to ensure that the threshold limit was included in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) before deciding on the application by the Council. It was added that the Gower AONB Team Leader was working with Planning Policy colleagues to make the necessary changes, but it would take well into the New Year to finalise the SPG. The remaining actions for the project were also outlined.

The Group discussed the following: -

- Security issues linked to a lack of lighting and how the SPG template had been widely used throughout the UK and had focussed upon many areas including security;
- Provision of highway lighting where required and not restricting any highway lighting;
- Examples of good / poor lighting within the AONB;
- The 3000 kelvin threshold required by IDA.

**Resolved** that the contents of the report be noted.

**30 Welsh Government Consultation - National Development Framework.**

The Gower AONB Officer presented a 'for information' report on behalf of the Gower AONB Team Leader. It was explained that Welsh Government had just concluded a formal consultation on the draft National Development Framework (NDF), which would set the direction for development in Wales from 2020 to 2040.

It was added that the draft NDF addressed national priorities through the planning system, including: -

- sustaining and developing a vibrant economy;
- decarbonisation;
- developing resilient ecosystems; and
- improving the health and well-being of our communities.

Details of the consultation were also available on the Welsh Government website and Swansea Council's response to the draft NDF raised specific points regarding Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was provided.

### **31 Gower AONB Design Guide Review.**

The Gower AONB Officer provided an update report regarding the Gower AONB Design Guide Review. It was added that following the adoption of the Local Development Plan (LDP) in February 2019, the Design Guide had been updated and extended by the Planning Policy Team, working with Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners. The revised edition would include new sections on Chalets; Lighting and Advertising Signage.

It was expected that a 6-week public consultation would start at the end of January 2020, with adoption and publication expected in May 2020.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- Separate guidance being drafted for caravan parks;
- Review of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG);
- Working methods of the Steering Group in assisting with scrutinising / drafting of policies affecting the AONB;
- How the Steering Group is consulted with effectively and directly involving the Group in drafting / reviewing policies;
- Relevant information being circulated to the Steering Group, e.g. being informed of relevant projects within the AONB.

**Resolved** that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) A Working Group be established early in the New Year from the Steering Group membership to have a direct input into the review.

### **32 Cefn Bryn Parking Issues.**

Steve Heard, Vice-Chair provided a verbal update regarding the Working Group meeting that was held to discuss the on-going parking problems at Cefn Bryn.

He added that the Sub-Group had highlighted the following: -

- No-one was really tackling the parking problem at the brow of the hill;
- People were parking further onto Cefn Bryn, causing erosion;
- Visitors could only park on the current area at the top of Cefn Bryn to be able to visit Arthur's Stone;
- The parking space available at the brow of the hill needed to be reduced in order to be able to control the parking / overnight parking;
- Visitors must be able to park somewhere.

The Steering Group commented upon the surface at the brow of Cefn Bryn; the options available for the future; educating visitors regarding the animals; getting visitors off the road when stopping at the top of the hill; funding options and; impact upon the SSSI.

**Resolved** that the contents of the update be noted.

### 33 Sustainable Development Fund.

The Gower AONB Officer presented the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Panel Financial Summary report.

It was outlined that Welsh Government had confirmed the SDF budget for 2019/20 as £55,000, with a verbal commitment for the same for 2020/21.

The fund was now heavily committed, both for 2019/20 and 2020/21 as follows: -

- **2019/20**

Total Funds available	£ 55,000
Committed Funds	£ 53,000
Uncommitted Funds	£ 2,000

For the current year, there were 12 projects approved with SDF funding for 2019/20 and a further application was anticipated. This would fully commit the SDF budget. There had also been two further expressions of interest, for which there was currently no funding available. The Committed Funds figure included the CCS Management Fee of £5,500 (10%).

- **2020/21**

£36,030 committed, with 2 applications worth £19,000 anticipated, which would leave the fund fully committed.

- **2021/22**

£13,500 committed, with 1 application worth £10,000 anticipated

- **Additional Capital Funding – 2019/20**

Welsh Government had provided an additional £74,172 (Capital Funding 2019/20) for specific projects and details of the Welsh Government Press Release and the note summarising the projects were provided.

**Resolved** that the contents of the report be noted.

**34 Gower AONB Management Plan Sub-Group.**

It was reported that the Sub Group had been organised but were waiting to finalise a date to meet. The Steering Group queried if additional members were required for the Sub-Group.

**Resolved** that: -

- 1) The contents of the update be noted;
- 2) The query regarding additional membership be forwarded to the Gower AONB Team Leader.

**35 Proposed Multi-Use Footpaths.**

Chris Dale, Countryside Access Team Leader informed the Steering Group regarding Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) proposals to change rights of access.

The Steering Group discussed the issue at length as follows: -

- Legislative proposals / changes from Welsh Government;
- WAG consultations regarding footpath access, distinguishing between bridle paths / footpaths and close proximity to residential houses of footpaths on Gower;
- Allowing cyclists access to use bridleways on Gower, particularly at Ryer's Down, Llanmadoc Hill and Harding's Down;
- Potential damage to the significant earth works / ancient monuments in the area;
- Potential safety issues caused by cyclists startling horses on bridleways, poor behaviour of cyclists towards horses / riders and addressing the 'silent approach';
- Educating users (particularly cyclists) in the use of footpaths / bridleways;
- Ensuring the decision of WAG is not pre-judged;
- Avoiding 'rallies' on small areas of track / footpath.

**Resolved** that the contents of the report be noted.

**36 Commons Action Steering Group.**

John Marson, Gower Commons Action Safety Group highlighted the ongoing high death toll of animals on Gower Commons due to the high speed of traffic. He added that commoners were removing their animals from the Commons which was allowing trees / foliage to grow out of control. He also highlighted that additional speed warning signage was needed.

**Resolved** that the item be added to the agenda of the next scheduled meeting.

**37 Lack of Response by Planning Services.**

Gordon Howe, Gower Society commented upon, in his experience, the very slow / little response received from Swansea Council in relation to complaints submitted.

He added that he wished to avoid pursuing matters via the Ombudsman and urged everyone to be aware of issues that were damaging the AONB.

**38 Woodland at Cartersford.**

Gordon Howe, Gower Society highlighted the felling of trees at Cartersford and the fact that a static caravan was located in the middle of the woodland, which in his opinion was illegal. He requested that action be taken to stop the destruction / remove the caravan.

He was advised by that no enforcement action was required at present and that an NRW felling licence had been issued for the work.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

**Chair**