



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
<https://bit.ly/3fIR90U>

On: Monday, 29 June 2020

Time: 2.00 pm

Chair: Councillor Paul Lloyd

Membership:

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

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

Agenda

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3 Minutes. To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting(s).	1 - 6
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Next Meeting: To be confirmed.



Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Monday, 22 June 2020

Contact: Democratic Services: - 636923

Agenda Item 3



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

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

Agenda Item 4



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 29 June 2020

Gower AONB Management Plan - Update

Gower AONB Management Plan Sub-group

The sub-group comprises:

Cllr Paul Lloyd Cllr Lynda James
Paul Thornton Jo Gooding
Paul Meller Mike Scott
Chris Lindley Gordon Howe
NRW representative

The Sub-group last met on 15th January 2020, with the main outcomes being around the:

Review process and timetable – After some delay because of COVID-19, the table below outlines the process and outputs required to get an adopted, reviewed management plan by March 2022 (5 years since the current one was adopted). It does not cover all the specific requirements of the process, but gives a broad idea of what is required and where the sub-groups main activities will be. This timeframe is required to factor in statutory and public consultation periods and Welsh translation of the draft and final Plans.

Date	Action	Output	Notes
2020			
June	Formal notification to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) of intention to review the AONB management plan	Letter	Required under S.90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
July-August	Prepare State of the AONB report	State of the AONB Report	Sub-group approval of documents
	Prepare Strategic Environmental	SEA Scoping Report	

	Assessment (SEA) Scoping		
Sept-Oct	Scoping consultation period		Consultation with NRW and Cadw required under SEA Regulations
August-November	Preparation of draft AONB Management Plan	Draft Management Plan	Sub-group approval of draft Plan
December	AONB Partnership Meeting	Approved draft Management Plan	Partnership approval of draft plan
2021			
January - February	Prepare public consultation on draft Management Plan and SEA Report	Council/Planning Committee approval	Council approval for public consultation required.
March - June	Public consultation period		
July-November	Review of consultation feedback and proposed changes	Consultation Report and Final Management Plan	Sub-group approval of final Management Plan
December	AONB Partnership meeting	Approval	Partnership approval of final Management Plan
2022			
January-February	Preparation of Council papers		
March	Council Meeting	Formal adoption by Swansea Council	

State of the AONB report – since the meeting and as a result of ongoing discussions, Natural Resources Wales has:

- provided all Welsh AONBs with a series of environmental datasets/statistics specifically cut to the AONB boundary
- Published the South West Wales Area Statement:

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/area-statements/south-west-wales-area-statement/?lang=en>

Both of these points will be beneficial to and influential on the preparation of the management plan.

The AONB team will formally write to NRW to start the review process (which will have further detail on the timeline) and we will also commence the compilation of the State of the AONB report.

Chris Lindley
Gower AONB Team Leader
16 June 2020

Agenda Item 5



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 29 June 2020

Welsh Government Funding and the National Landscape Partnership (NLP)

The Welsh Government, in its statement Valued and Resilient, called on the designated landscapes in Wales to champion collaborative approaches to maximise benefits and tackle challenges. It states that ‘a *National Designated Landscapes Partnership will be established to develop a robust culture of collaboration.*’

In June 2019, Welsh Government Landscape & Outdoor Recreation (LOR) branch officials produced an options paper for establishing the NLP. This set out possible scope and remit, as well as management arrangements. LOR carried out a written consultation exercise with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the 8 National Park Authorities (NPAs) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and a summary of the consultation responses was discussed at the NRW-chaired Designated Landscape liaison meeting in October 2019. At that meeting it was agreed that a sub-group be formed to take forward the proposal. The sub-group was comprised of NRW, LOR, Snowdonia NPA (SNPA) (representing the 3 National Parks) and National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) (representing the 5 AONBs). The sub—group agreed that NAAONB and SNPA would collaborate on a proposal to Welsh Government.

LOR officials were content with the proposal submitted, and this is attached with the papers here. The sub-group invited Expressions of Interest (Eoi) from DL management bodies to host the Partnership team as set out in the proposal. Gower AONB were one of three management bodies to submit an Eoi, but Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority have now been selected to host the Partnership team, although work to proceed with this has been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Linked to the NLP initiative, Welsh Government Landscape and Outdoor Recreation Branch (LOR) issued details of a capital investment fund across Wales’ eight Designated Landscapes (DLs), to ensure that they can contribute to key Welsh Government objectives around decarbonisation, more resilient rural communities and sustainable tourism.

In the current financial year (20/21) this Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) Programme initially allocated £4.75M to projects within the 3 National Parks and 5 AONBs in Wales. The draft indicative allocation expected that £300k would be available for project delivery within – or directly benefiting - Gower AONB.

The SLSP programme was delayed due to the COVID-19, and the overall funding allocation was reduced. However, Gower AONB has now been awarded £135k of capital funding toward the following projects:

- Clyne Valley Country Park - Capital works and improvements to visitor facilities, access routes and heritage features.
- Purchase of battery-powered countryside management tools.
- Bishop's Wood Local Nature Reserve – sustainable drainage and access improvements.

Chris Lindley
Gower AONB Team Leader

17 June 2020

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 29 June 2020

Gower AONB Design Guide - Revision of Supplementary Planning Guidance

AONB Design Guide – Update

The Gower AONB Design Guide was published in November 2011, and was well received. It provides a practical design tool to be used by all involved in the design and development process, whether planning permission is required or not. It sets out the good design objectives to be followed to ensure that development respects the distinctive character of both the natural and built environment of Gower.

It included specific design modules covering the more common types of development seen on Gower, namely:

- residential
- agricultural
- commercial and tourism
- conversions
- together with guidance on landscape design and repair and maintenance

Following the adoption of the LDP in February 2019, the Design Guide has been updated and extended by the Planning Policy Team, working with Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners. The revised edition will include new sections on:

- Chalets
- Lighting
- Advertising Signage

It is expected that a 6 week public consultation will start by October 2020, with adoption as SPG and publication by early 2021.

The adoption as SPG of the lighting guidance within the Design Guide will enable International Dark Skies to consider the application for Dark Sky Community status.

Mike Scott
Gower AONB Officer
15 June 2020

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 29 June 2020

Sustainable Development Fund - Financial Report

Grant Scheme 2019/20

The SDF budget of £55,000 was fully committed, with all funds paid out. A total of 13 projects were supported, with grants from £150 to £12,000.

An Annual Report has been submitted to Welsh Government, and will be distributed to Steering Group members shortly for information.

Grant Scheme 2020/21

Welsh Government have confirmed the SDF budget for 2020/21 as £100,000.

There are currently 7 projects approved with SDF funding for 2020/21, with 2 applications to be considered by the grants panel in July, and 2 further applications anticipated at present.

Further projects will be brought forward during 2020/21, to fully commit the funds.

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

Total Funds available	£ 100,000
Committed Funds	£ 43,170
Uncommitted Funds	£ 56,830
Applications under consideration by the panel	£ 21,500

Grant Scheme 2021/22

The budget for 2021/22 has not been confirmed, but is anticipated to be £55,000.

Two projects have been approved, with £15,500 committed, and currently £39,500 uncommitted. Four other applications are anticipated at present.

Mike Scott
Gower AONB Officer
15 June 2020

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 29 June 2020

Clyne Valley Country Park

Clyne Valley Country Park - on the western fringe of the city - is one of the largest contiguous areas of land in the stewardship of Swansea Council (c.300+ha). Clyne Valley has multiple special features and assets, and is an area easily accessible to much of the city's population.

Clyne Valley became a Country Park in the late 1970s, following Council acquisition of the area and following the recommendations of a strategic planning study in 1978. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1968 gives local authorities the power to provide Country Parks for the purposes of 'providing, or improving, opportunities for the enjoyment of the countryside by the public'.

Clyne Valley Country Park (CVCP) is also a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC), with significant areas of the following habitats:

- Broadleaved woodland (including areas of ancient woodland)
- Semi-natural grasslands that have not been agriculturally improved
- Permanent and ephemeral ponds
- Most of the Clyne River system and its tributaries

Wet woodland in the adjacent Killay Marsh Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is owned by Swansea Council but leased and managed by the Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales.

There is a huge range of species recorded in the area, including otter and a number of bat species roosting and foraging in the valley.

The western side of the Country Park is within the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). On the eastern side of the valley, an extensive area above Clyne River is an historic landfill where operations ceased in the 1970s; much of this has been colonised by Japanese Knotweed.

Industrial heritage and historical associations with the Vivian family are recognised by designations including:

- Clyne Castle Grade 1 Historic Park and Garden - which extends into the woodland north of Clyne Castle (Cadw has recently indicated that the Register entry may be extended considerably into the Country Park)

- Five Scheduled Monuments
- Two Listed Buildings
- Numerous features identified on the Historic Environment Register


Planning policy has maintained the provision of Clyne Valley as a Country Park since it was first proposed. The current Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP, adopted February 2019) includes a specific policy (TR4) for Clyne Valley Country Park. The LDP identifies the boundary to the Country Park and formalises Council policy relating to its use. Clyne Valley is also specifically acknowledged in the LDP as representing a strategically important green space and a key element of the County's Green Infrastructure network.

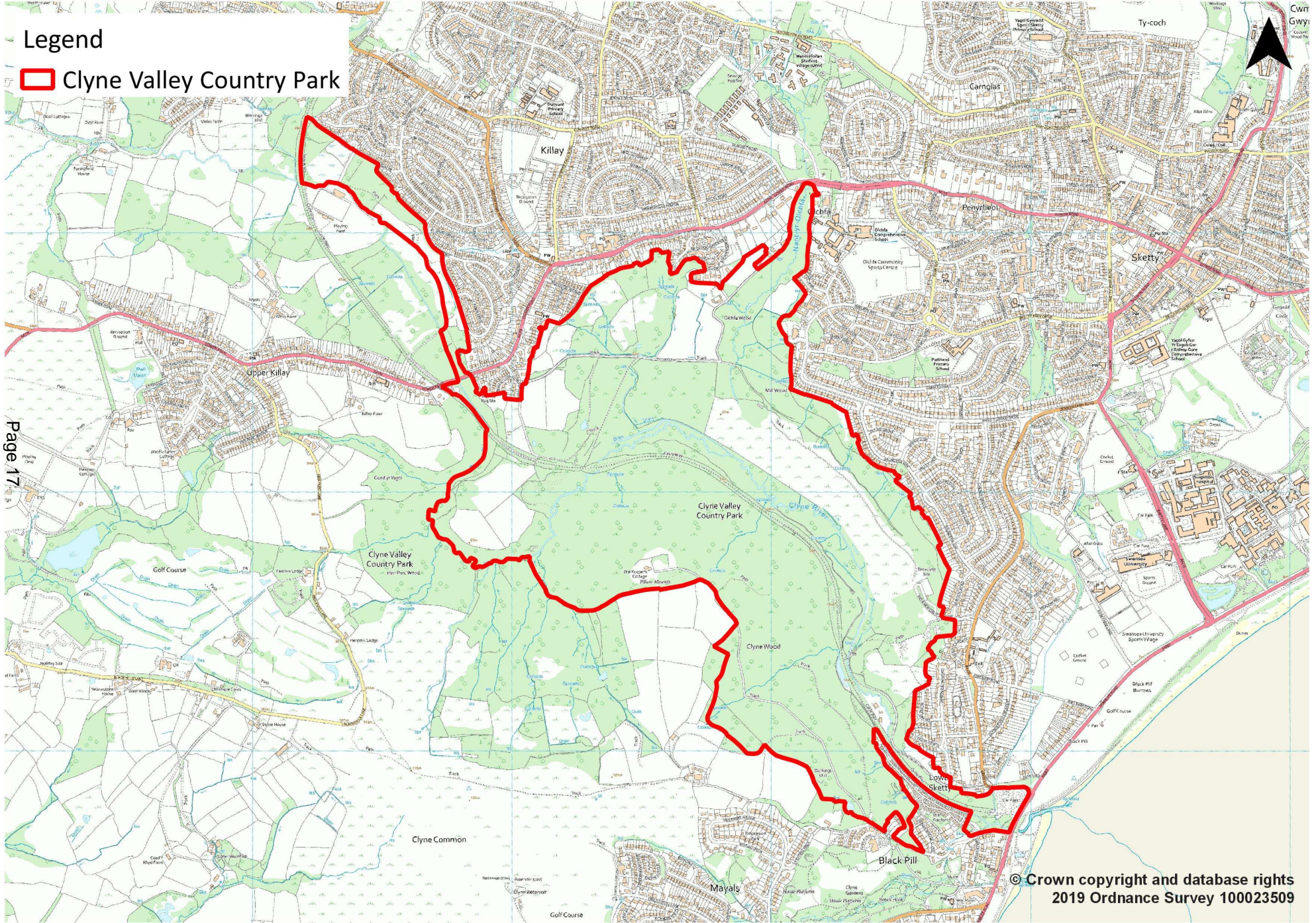
However, beyond these LDP policies, the Council has no identified management objectives or departmental responsibility for CVCP. There has been no review of Clyne Valley, the Country Park or the Council's strategy or objectives for the area since the 1978 planning study – more than 40 years ago. Management decisions are taken following separate departmental priorities and within budgetary constraints.

Management issues over recent months, including damage from third party activities during COVID-19 restrictions, have identified the need to improve the Council's overall approach to managing the Country Park. The Planning Policy and Natural Environment Section are starting to coordinate this (both internally and with stakeholders & local community organisations, with a view to developing a strategy for Members and senior management so there is a clear view on direction and responsibilities into the long term.

Chris Lindley
Gower AONB Team Leader
17 June 2020

Legend

 Clyne Valley Country Park



Agenda Item 9



Report of Steve Heard

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 29 June 2020

Parking on Cefn Bryn

I would like to propose discussing the situation regarding the parking at the top of Cefn Bryn. I ask for this as I have been approached by many local residents expressing concerns regarding this matter.

Steve Heard
Vice-Chair
Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group

Agenda Item 10



Report of the Gower Society Representative

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 29 June 2020

Gower Society Issues

The Gower Society would appreciate discussion and comment from Members on the following matters: -

- 1) Concerns and anomaly of permitted Development for 28 days to sell products in sensitive locations within the AONB and effects upon the landscape.
- 2) How we can protect sensitive woodlands, trees and hedgerows from indiscriminate felling at an earlier stage of any potential damage?

Better and quicker collaboration between the managers of the AONB and other agencies such as NRW is suggested. Recent examples such as Carters Ford Woodland, Fairy Hill Parkland and Long Acre Field and adjacent woodland in Caswell.

- 3) The Council has received its first application in the AONB for a One Planet Earth enterprise that includes two potential dwellings. Currently the LDP could allow this but if it is approved where does it end? It was initially excluded in the final Draft LDP but changed in the Final Approved version.

Gordon Howe
Gower Society Representative

Agenda Item 11



Report of James Chambers & Roger Button

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 29 June 2020

COVID 19 Restrictions and Visitor Behaviour

All being well, we are emerging from the first wave of the current pandemic and we are all hopeful of a vaccine in the near future.

As lockdown unravels, with holidays abroad complicated by quarantine measures and an absence of local controls, Gower (amongst other rural areas) is a playground for those who just want to get out.

Granted, we have had an exceptionally dry and warm spring (which may or may not be consistent with climate change), but in recent weeks Gower has been victim to significant littering (hedgerows and beaches), indiscriminate parking and public fowling (where car parks are open, but toilet facilities not), by people from outside of the area (therefore in contravention of pandemic travel restrictions) all of which have increased risks (cross infection/contamination and reduced access for emergency responders) to the local communities.

Are there measures, which the group can discuss or recommend, to help limit the potential damage and vandalism of the environment in the AONB and improve the safety of communities within it whilst the pandemic is prevalent?

James Chambers & Roger Button