



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 15 March 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

Councillors

M C Child
L James

J P Curtice

P R Hood-Williams

Steering Group Members

R Button
G Howe
B Parry

J France
P Jenkins
P Thornton

S Heard
H Osborn

Also Present

J Burgess

Gower Society

Officer(s)

Paul Meller

Natural Environment Section Manager

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

Mike Scott

Gower AONB Officer

Jeremy Parkhouse

Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillors: A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: J Chambers, S Hill and D P Tucker

12 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interests were declared: -

R Button, J France, S Heard, G Howe, P Jenkins, B Parry and P Thornton declared personal and prejudicial interests in Minute No.20 – Election of Non-Councillor Steering Group Members and left the meeting prior to any discussions on this item.

13 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 30 November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

14 Presentation - Improving Community and Visitor Resources at Port Eynon.

Niall Maxwell and Will Judge of the Rural Office for Architecture Ltd provided a detailed and informative presentation regarding Improving Community and Visitor Resources at Port Eynon. The following was discussed: -

- Plan of the concerned area in Port Eynon;
- Development Brief;
- Accommodation Schedule;
- Programme;
- Key Sites Move;
- Reroute Traffic: Travel and Transport;
- Public Realm;
- Beach Connection;
- Parade – Community & Commercial;
- Play & Seasonal Activity;
- Feedback Themes;
- Balance of the Brief – Community;
- Overview – Options 1 to 5;
- Village Hall Proposals;
- Vision.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- Consultation process, including groups / individuals consulted with, the ongoing consultation with local groups / businesses, the need to consult with the wider community surrounding the area, consultation with holiday makers / visitors, the effect of COVID 19 upon the ability to consult in person and planned engagement events;
- Transport provision, particularly parking spaces, disabled access, access for horses to the beach, proposal to remove parking from the public realm area leading to the beach, park and ride possibilities similar to those used in other areas e.g. Cornwall, narrow access issues particularly on the corner near the Church, huge traffic problems encountered by Rhossili in recent years and avoiding similar problems in Port Eynon;
- Concern regarding the proposed level of commercialism of the project, enhancing the current facilities, options 1 to 5, how revenue is required to finance aspects of the development, the poor standard of the current facilities, the opportunity to introduce new facilities which would enhance the area and extend the hours of the day / extend the tourism and visitor season.

The Chair thanked the Rural Office for Architecture Ltd representatives for their presentation and looked forward to being further updated.

15 Update - Parking on Cefn Bryn.

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader provided an update report regarding parking on Cefn Bryn.

It was outlined that the scope of works agreed with the landowner, Cefn Bryn Commoners, Natural Resources for Wales (NRW) and Swansea Council Highways comprised of:

- Roadside bunding
- An area for road vehicle pull-in; a crescent-shaped arrangement of boulders on the common, centred around the two points where vehicles have typically left/entered the highway; this will allow vehicles to park up to 15 yards off the highway; and
- a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) creating a clearway along the road from Cilbion to Reynoldston.

The Council received formal SSSI assent for the works from NRW on 29 January 2021, the physical works started 3 February and were completed before the end of February. It was added that the TRO process was in hand, and if there were no objections, should be in place later in the spring.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

16 Progress Report - Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places Programme.

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided a progress report on the Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places.

It was explained that in addition to the works on Cefn Bryn, the Welsh Government SLSP Programme of capital funding for AONBs and National Parks had enabled the following Gower projects in 2021/22: -

- Purchase of battery-powered chainsaws and other countryside management tools for use in Gower AONB;
- Access, Heritage improvements and interpretation in Clyne Valley Country Park;
- Access improvements within Bishop's Wood Local Nature Reserve including a sustainable drainage system to avoid flooding and erosion to the path network.

It was added that all of these projects were either completed or were expected to be completed in the first quarter of the 2021/22 financial year. Welsh Government had indicated that further funding was available for the forthcoming 2021/22 financial year and the Gower AONB Team were developing project proposals with partners for consideration / approval of Welsh Government and the National Designated Landscapes Partnership (NDLP). These projects will included:

- Further public access and heritage improvements in Clyne Valley Country Park;
- Nature recovery and grazing management on Fairwood Common;
- Improvements to the visitor facility and heritage in Port Eynon and Horton.

Details on the projects agreed through the NDLP would be reported at the next scheduled meeting.

The Steering Group discussed the nature recovery and grazing management on Fairwood Common project and it was commented that the addition of road safety signs was a very positive development.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

17 Update - Gower AONB Management Plan.

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided an update report on the Gower AONB Management Plan.

It was reported that the Gower AONB Management Plan was adopted by Swansea Council in March 2017 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required the plan to be reviewed every five years.

To oversee the preparation of the revised Management Plan, the AONB Partnership Steering Group established a Management Plan sub-group in 2019. The sub-group last met in January 2020 and established a review process and timeline. The sub-group were due to report back to the main group in the March 2020 meeting; however that meeting was abandoned due to Covid-19 and work on the management plan was suspended due to other pressures on both sub-group members and officers.

The membership of the sub-group was provided and it was added that the AONB Team were now in a position to resume work on the revised Management Plan. Table 1 of the report broadly outlined the process and outputs required to get an adopted, reviewed Management Plan.

The Steering Group discussed resuming this work and reviewed the membership of the sub-group.

Resolved that the Sub-Group proceeds with resuming the review of the Management Plan and the current membership be retained.

18 Dark Sky Monitoring Report.

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.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

19 Sustainable Development Fund - Financial Summary.

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

It was confirmed that the SDF budget for 2020/21 was £100,000. There were currently 19 projects approved with SDF funding for 2020/21, which had committed the full funding available for this financial year.

A total of 8 potential projects had been withdrawn this year, with two more current projects needing to be rescheduled as a result of the impact of Covid 19. The Committed Funds figure included the CCS Management Fee of £10,000 (10%).

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

Grant Scheme 2021/22

The budget for 2021/22 had not been confirmed, but Welsh Government had indicated it was likely to be £100,000. 8 projects had been approved, with £46,781 committed and currently £53,219 remained uncommitted.

20 Election of Non-Councillor Steering Group Members.

Note: - All non-Councillor / Natural Resources Wales representatives left the meeting prior to discussions on this item.

Jeremy Parkhouse, Democratic Services Officer provided a report which presented the options available to the Steering Group in respect of the forthcoming election of non-Councillor Steering Group Members.

It was outlined that as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Gower AONB Partnership Annual Meeting was cancelled in June 2020. Steering Group meetings had continued to be held online and the meeting on 15 March 2021 was the fourth meeting held via Microsoft Teams.

It was added that the Annual Meeting for 2021-2022 had been scheduled for 5 July 2021 and was due to include the election of non-Councillor Steering Group Members. However, due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, it would be difficult to appoint via a remote meeting and it remained uncertain whether face to face meetings would resume by that date.

It was proposed that the term of office of non-Councillor Steering Group Members be extended by a year and their election deferred to 2022. This would also see their election fall in line with the Local Government Elections. It was also proposed that the membership of non-Councillor Members to the Sustainable Development Fund Panel and Sustainable Development Fund Appeals Panel be extended by a year and their election deferred to 2022.

Resolved that: -

- 1) the term of office of non-Councillor Steering Group Members be extended by 1 year and their election be deferred to the 2022-23 Municipal year;
- 2) the membership of non-Councillor Members to the Sustainable Development Fund Panel and Sustainable Development Fund Appeals Panel be extended by a year and their election deferred to 2022.

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm

Chair