

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE GOWER AONB PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP

HELD AT THE GREYHOUND INN, OLDWALLS, LLANRHIDIAN,
SWANSEA ON MONDAY 10 MARCH 2014 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillor R Francis-Davies (Chair) presided

Councillor(s): **Councillor(s):**

M C Child K E Marsh

Representing Organisations:

R Button	-	Tourism Swansea Bay
S Heard	-	Gower Riding Club/Port Eynon Community Council
Community Councillor	-	Upper Killay/Three Crosses Community Councils
P R Hood-Williams	-	Gower Society (Vice-Chair)
G Howe	-	Gower Walking Festival
B Parry	-	Gower Commoners Association
P Lanfear	-	Forestry and Farming
A Woodman	-	Llanrhidian Higher Community Council
Community Councillor	-	
R Cooper	-	
J Davies	-	BayTrans
C Daugherty	-	Natural Resources Wales

Officers:

K Flanders	-	Planning Policy and Environment Manager, Planning Services
C Lindley	-	Gower AONB Team Leader
M Scott	-	Gower AONB Officer
H Lloyd	-	Gower AONB Ranger
J Parkhouse	-	Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

I Button	-	Resident
P Rouge	-	Llanrhidian Lower Community Council
D Cowley	-	Llanrhidian Lower Community Council
L Pearce	-	Resident
V Pearce	-	Resident
D John	-	Resident
N Pritchard	-	Resident
L Mabbett	-	Resident

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G Edwards	-	Resident
A Tucker	-	Resident
M Cowley	-	Resident
E Cowley	-	Resident
L Edwards	-	Resident
A Cowley	-	Resident
H Jenkins	-	Resident

38. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and commenced proceedings. He informed the meeting that Agenda Item number 11 - Affordable Housing on Gower had been withdrawn due to matters contained in the report being part of a "live" planning appeal.

39. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J E C Harris and Rebecca Wright - Natural Resources Wales.

40. **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST**

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

41. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Mr. P. Rouge asked a question in relation to Item No. 11/Minutes No. 48 - Affordable Housing on Gower. The Chair stated that the Item will be discussed at the next scheduled meeting.

42. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group held on 2 December 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

43. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Minute 34 - National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) - Annual Report and AGM Update

It was queried whether John Hague had been invited to attend a future meeting of the Steering Group in order to provide feedback in relation to his role on the NAAONB. The Chair stated that a letter inviting John Hague to a future meeting will be forwarded in due course.

44. **LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY FOR CARAVAN CAMPING SITES WITHIN GOWER AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)**

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided a report on landscape capacity study for caravan and camping sites within Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

It was outlined that the Gower Landscape Assessment (LCA, 2013) was carried out by John Campion Associates on behalf of the Gower Landscape Partnership (of which the City and County of Swansea is a key partner). The Gower LCA identified 41 character areas and provided an individual report for each. A significant issue that arose from the LCA was the identification of existing caravan and camping sites as being a significant threat to a landscape quality of the AONB due to their detrimental visual impact. As a result, the Authority has commissioned John Campion Associates to undertake a follow on study to the LCA in relation to caravan and camping sites. The results will contribute to the evidence base for the emerging local development plan.

The brief was for a landscape capacity study in relation to caravan and camping sites within the AONB, based on the landscape character areas defined within the 2012 Gower Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). The brief comprised two parts:

1. the appraisal reach of the 41 landscape character areas to identify those that were at capacity (or have no capacity), or where additional sites could be accommodated, with a clear explanation of the reasoning behind the findings for each landscape character area;
2. for those landscape character areas with potential landscape capacity to accommodate additional camping/caravanning development without detrimental to the AONB landscape qualities - identifying key landscape and visual issues and constraints.

It was added that the study considers detailed siting, layout and development density factors as core considerations, in addition to visibility levels, proposed boundary treatments and other landscape assimilation measures. These matters will be dealt with in the form of a design guide which will provide a framework to achieve the successful integration of any caravan or camping site on Gower - either as new development or as mitigation treatments for existing developments.

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It was added that the study which commenced in March 2013 was substantially complete. A final draft of the report was awaited from the consultants and a dissemination event had been arranged for interested stakeholders on Wednesday, 12 March 2014.

A number of questions were asked of the officer who responded accordingly.

AGREED that:

- (1) the contents of the report be noted;
- (2) a link containing the results of the survey be circulated to members of the Steering Group.

45. **GOWER AONB DESIGN GUIDE**

The Gower AONB Officer provided an update report on the Gower AONB Design Guide. It was outlined that an updated version had been prepared for publication by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners/White Design who have produced a design guide in electronic format which will allow amendments to be made by the Authority as required at a later date.

The document will be available on the City and County of Swansea website and due to its size, only a limited number of hard copies will be available. The production of the guide received financial support from Natural Resources Wales and the Gower Society. An event was planned on 12 March 2014 at the King Arthur Hotel, Reynoldston, Swansea in order to promote the guide to a professional audience and members of the Steering Group had also been invited.

Comments received to date had been positive but there have also been suggestions that the size of the document had caused some user problems. However, this is unavoidable as the document covers a complex issue in necessary detail. A possibility of producing a summary of the guidance could be explored, however, the adopted version is supplementary planning guidance would take precedence.

It was commented that while the content of the document was of excellent quality, the detail and length was problematic and the guide would benefit from having a simplified version. Comments were also made in relation to local planning matters where the design guide had not been followed and the City and County of Swansea had not acted upon complaints received.

AGREED that:

- (1) the content of the report be noted;
- (2) the Steering Group look at the possibility of additional funding in order to cover the cost of producing a more "reader friendly" version of the Design Guide;
- (3) the Planning Policy and Environment Manager investigates the planning applications highlighted where the Design Guide had not been followed.

46. **IDEAS FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS**

G Howe (Gower Society) stated that the Gower Society had funds available for Special Projects within communities. All Community Councils had been written to with regards to grants for projects largely within the AONB. It was commented that the Gower Society were involved in a project of replacing and updating walls at Kilvrough. He added that if any organisations had any projects planned, they should contact the Gower Society in order to establish if funding is available.

47. **GOWER AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided a progress report on the Gower AONB Management Plan. The workplan timetable was provided as follows:

1. Publish state of the AONB report by 31 December 2014;
2. Publish AONB management plan by 31 March 2014;
3. Adopt final AONB management plan by 31 November 2014.

The Authority was currently on target with the workplan timetable. The state of the AONB report was issued at the AONB Partnership Group Meeting on 2 December 2013. A draft AONB Management Plan has been written and is currently with Senior Management for approval prior to the public consultation process which starts with the publication of the draft Gower AONB Management Plan. It was intended to run to public consultation of the draft, with responses used to amend the final report, prior to adoption by the Council. The Management Plan will then be adopted by the City and County of Swansea and the anticipated date is 31 November 2014.

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It was added that the Steering Group had overall responsibility for the AONB and it was preferable that the matter could be discussed by the Steering Group prior to the annual forum in June 2014. A draft version can then be finalised and forwarded to Cabinet and Council prior to the consultation process.

AGREED that:

- (1) the contents of the report be noted;
- (2) the proposed timetable be agreed;
- (3) officers proceed with drafting the Management Plan in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Steering Group.

48. **AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON GOWER**

The Item was withdrawn.

49. **RESTRICTED WALKING - ACCESS AT RHOSSILI DUE TO BAD WEATHER**

The Gower AONB Officer provided an update report on the restricted walking access at Rhossili due to the recent bad weather. It was outlined that a section of the coast at Rhossili had slipped taking with it part of the public footpath to Rhossili beach. For safety reasons, the path had been closed temporarily until work can be completed.

It was added that this is a popular beach access and forms an important link to the Wales Coastal Path and as such it is been treated as high priority by the Countryside Access Team, City and County of Swansea.

The area of land had been subject to slippage previously and is currently still unstable. It is likely that erosion will continue in this immediate area and as a result a new route is planned, around 25 to 30 metres north of the existing steps. The new construction will not be of the heavy construction but will be of selective aggregate path/steps treads with heavy duty timber frontage. This will be easy to remove or move in the future as the erosion continues and will entail some legal work to formally move the right of way. The main issue at present is clearing the relevant permissions as the site is archeologically, geological and botanically protected as it is a SAM, SSI and SAC. As the path runs through the site of the early medieval village of Rhossili, any work will require consent from CADW which is in addition to the consents required from Natural Resources Wales. Neither the Council or National Trust (as the landowner) current have funds for the paths construction works which are estimated at £10,000.

The Countryside Access Team is concluding discussions with Natural Resources Wales and The Gower Society who have both expressed an interest in providing the necessary funds for the work and it is hoped that this will be confirmed very shortly. The intention is to carry out the Pathwork during May 2014 when the ground conditions will have improved and the necessary consents and administrative issues being resolved.

Concern was expressed by the Steering Group with regards to the General Public still walking on the current path and concrete structure which is highly dangerous. It was confirmed that a sign was in place along with the area being taped off warning the public of the danger.

AGREED that the contents of the report be noted.

50. **HOW TO INCREASE AWARENESS WITHIN THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA STAFF OF THE REGULATIONS AS TO SPECIFICALLY RELATE TO THE AONB AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADING BY EXAMPLE**

G Howe (Gower Society) highlighted that City and County of Swansea and Utility Companies are undertaking work on Gower that does not sit with the regulations and procedures required within AONB. It appeared that the Council and Utility company staff were not aware of the policies and procedures needed to be undertaken, particularly within the AONB.

The Steering Group discussed the issue in detail and highlighted both positive and negative examples in relation to the City and County of Swansea and Utility companies.

AGREED that:

- (1) a memo be sent via the Director and Cabinet Member for Place to Heads of Service reminding them of the regulations and policies within the Gower AONB;
- (2) examples of bad practice by Utility Companies be forwarded to the Planning Policy and Environment Manager in order for problems to be addressed.

51. **GOWER AONB RANGER REPORT**

The Gower AONB provided the Ranger Report for the 3rd Quarter 2013/2014.

The Steering Group discussed a number of issues highlighted within the report and commented upon the ongoing work of the Gower AONB Ranger.

AGREED that the contents of the report be noted.

52. **GOWER AONB ANNUAL FORUM**

The Gower AONB Officer requested the Steering Group discuss proposals for the Gower AONB Partnership Group Annual Forum.

Discussions took place in relation to holding the annual forum at a suitable location on Gower, allowing adequate time for public questions at the Annual Forum/future meetings and discussing the issue of affordable housing on Gower at the next scheduled meeting.

It was added that at present, members of the Steering Group are elected annually. However, it was proposed that the terms of reference for the Steering Group be amended to allow Members to be selected for the term of the Council.

AGREED that:

- (1) the Gower AONB Partnership Forum be held at a suitable venue on Gower;
- (2) the Terms of Reference of the Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group be amended to allow Members to be elected for the term of the Council;
- (3) the Terms of Reference be amended to reflect that ten minutes public question time be allowed at meetings, subject to the discretion of the chair.
- (4) The topic of affordable housing on Gower be included on the agenda of the next Steering Group meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.

CHAIR