

# CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

## MINUTES OF THE GOWER AONB PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP

HELD AT THE MINOR HALL, REYNOLDSTON VILLAGE HALL,  
REYNOLDSTON, GOWER ON MONDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2016  
AT 7.00 PM

**PRESENT:** Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) presided

<b>Councillor(s)</b>	<b>Councillor(s)</b>
J P Curtice	L James

### **Representing Organisations:**

R Button	Tourism Swansea Bay
S Heard	Gower Riding Club/Port Eynon Community Council
S Hill	GGAT
R Cooper	Llanrhidian Higher Community Council
J Davies	Bay Trans
D Vine	Resident
R Wright	Natural Resources Wales

### **Officer(s)**

Chris Lindley	Gower AONB Team Leader
Mike Scott	Gower AONB Officer
Jeremy Parkhouse	Democratic Services Officer

### **ALSO PRESENT:**

B Parry	Walking Forum
P.C. P Davies	South Wales Police
P.C.S.O. A Brown	South Wales Police
P.C.S.O. J Borthwick	South Wales Police

### **Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): M C Child, J E C Harris, P R Hood-Williams and K E Marsh  
Independent Member(s): G Howe

## 12 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.**

The Chair welcomed all present to the Minor Hall, Reynoldston Village Hall and commenced proceedings.

## 13 **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.

14 **MINUTES.**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Gower AONB Partnership Annual Meeting held on 4 July 2016 be accepted as a correct record.

15 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

16 **ASH DIE-BACK. (VERBAL)**

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader provided the Steering Group with a presentation regarding ash die-back. He referred to a map of the UK provided by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) that showed the cases of ash die-back, including the location of diseased trees on Gower. The disease had been transported from Europe and the first recorded cases in the UK were found in East Anglia in 2012.

He explained that ash die-back is a fungal disease affecting ash trees. Diseased trees will show evidence of leaf damage, crown die-back and lesions. He added that the majority of woodland on Gower was ash, meaning the disease could have a significant affect upon the woodland canopy and the physical landscape.

He noted that there was no statutory management requirements for diseased trees and stated that removal of the trees would be counter-productive as there was very little that could be done to control or prevent the disease.

Examples of the disease were shown from Kent Downs AONB and it was commented that in the south east of England they were coming to terms with the disease. Current projects investigating the disease included the 'Living Ash Project' which was examining resistance to the disease.

The Group asked questions of the Gower AONB Team Leader which were responded to accordingly. It was requested that any possible cases of ash die-back be reported to NRW / Gower AONB Team.

**RESOLVED** that: -

- 1) The contents of the presentation be noted;
- 2) The Gower AONB Team Leader circulates information regarding ash die-back to Community and Town Councils.

17 **JAPANESE KNOTWEED ON GOWER. (VERBAL)**

Mike Scott, Gower AONB Officer provided a verbal update on Japanese Knotweed. The update was provided in response to comments made at the Annual Meeting regarding City and County of Swansea contractors cutting Japanese Knotweed when cutting hedgerows on Gower. He added that a survey was currently being undertaken to establish the extent of the spread of Japanese Knotweed on Gower.

He added that contractors cutting hedgerows were not supposed to cut the Knotweed. However, it appeared that in practice, this was not always happening.

The City & County of Swansea were running a spraying programme and a new form of treatment was being piloted.

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

18 **ROAD CASUALTIES ON GOWER COMMONS. (VERBAL)**

The Gower AONB Officer provided a verbal update regarding road casualties on Gower Commons. The issue was highlighted at the Annual Meeting and discussions with the Gower Commoners were ongoing. Reference was made to the successful introduction of average speed cameras between Llanrhidian and Gowerton and it was hoped that similar schemes could be introduced on Gower Commons.

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

19 **RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN & LOCAL ACTION GROUP.**

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided the Group with a report regarding the Rural Development (RDP) and Local Action Group (LAG). It was outlined that the RDP is a European Union (EU) programme that brings rural development in line with EU priorities. The programme identifies and agrees areas where EU support can give the most added value and it is part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The CAP for Wales enabled the funding of activities which support farmers, the countryside and rural communities. These activities encouraged the sustainable management of agriculture and the environment in four key areas:

- Agriculture
- Forestry, environment and countryside
- Supply chain for agriculture and forestry
- Quality of life in rural areas

The Local Action Group (LAG) is an unincorporated association which: -

- Seeks to build the capacity of local organisations and individuals to develop and implement projects;
- Draws up a transparent selection procedure, which avoid conflicts of interest, ensure that at least 50% of the votes in selection decisions are cast by partners which are not public authorities;
- Prioritises projects according to their contribution to meeting the objectives and targets in the Local Development Strategy (LDS);
- Prepares and publishes proposals or an ongoing project submission procedure & defining selection criteria;
- Receives and assesses applications for support;
- Selects projects, agreeing levels of grant support before approval. £445k grant pot, 80% intervention rate. Lead body will ensure compliance & eligibility;

- Monitors the implementation of LDS, projects supported and carries out evaluation of activities linked to strategy.

It was added that the City and County of Swansea was the lead body. The LDS vision and objectives, plus the current membership of the LAG and the three sub-groups were also provided.

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

## 20 **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND.**

The Gower AONB Officer provided an update report regarding the Sustainable Development Fund. It was added that the AONB Team operated a small grant scheme, The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) using funding provided by Welsh Government. The aim of the fund was to support innovative, sustainable, environmental projects, which involve local communities in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The SDF aimed, through partnership, to develop and test ways of achieving a more sustainable way of living in countryside of great natural beauty and diversity. The scheme would seek to conserve and enhance the local characteristics of culture, wildlife, landscape, land use and community. Sustaining the social well-being and economic viability of communities were also important aims of this scheme.

Applications can be for small grants of less than £3,000 or larger grants of up to £25,000. Applications over £3,000 are assessed by the SDF Grants Panel, which is a subgroup of the AONB Partnership Steering Group.

For the current year, the budget for the fund was £55,000. There were currently 15 projects being funded, with a further 4 applications either anticipated or under assessment. Currently £3,131.52 was uncommitted for 2016/17, but it was likely that this would be fully committed by the end of October.

The Committed Funds figure includes a CCS Management Fee of £5,500 (10%).

Total Funds available	£ 55,000.00
Committed Funds	£ 48,118.48
Under Commitment	£ 3,131.52
Pending Applications	£ 3,000.00

It was explained that the budget for 2017/18 would not be confirmed until March/April 2017. However, there were 4 projects currently being funded for 2017/18, with 2 applications under assessment, and 3 more anticipated within the next 2 months. A budget of £48,600 was anticipated, with £25,670 currently committed, and

applications valued at £20,600 anticipated. It was likely that the fund would be fully committed ahead of 2017/18.

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

21 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS.**

The following were discussed: -

**Toilet Provision and Cleanliness on Gower**

Barbara Parry highlighted that visitor experiences to Gower were being damaged due to the poor toilet provision and the very poor state of Council toilets. She added that if the Council wished to attract more tourists to Gower, the facilities provided needed to improve.

The Group discussed the condition of specific toilet facilities on Gower. Councillor J P Curtice commented that as Older People's Champion, she was aware of similar problems throughout Swansea.

**RESOLVED** that the matter be highlighted to the relevant Cabinet Member(s).

**Broadband / Mobile Phone Reception on Gower**

Concern was expressed regarding the poor coverage of broadband / mobile phone reception on Gower. It was added that some mobile phone apps were therefore not working because of the poor reception.

**RESOLVED** that the Gower AONB Team Leader updates the Group regarding the mobile mast at Horton.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

**CHAIR**