

**Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Management Plan
October 2016**

**City and County of Swansea
Dinas a Sir Abertawe**



FOREWORD

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are some of our finest landscapes in Britain. They are cherished by residents and visitors alike and allow millions of people from all walks of life to understand and connect with nature.

It is now 60 years since Gower became the first AONB in the UK and I am pleased to see that this Management Plan demonstrates how the AONB Partnership will continue to protect this unique landscape despite the significant challenges ahead. With a changing climate, the increasing demands of a growing population and in difficult economic times, the AONB Management Plan represents just the sort of community driven, collaborative approach needed to ensure our natural environment is maintained for generations to come.

I believe that the AONB designation should be a driver for the sustainable use and management of the natural resources in Gower and that this will be promoted by the framework now being set by contemporary Welsh legislation - particularly the Well Being of Future Generations Act and the Environment (Wales) Act.

This Management Plan makes the important connection between people and nature. Local communities have been central to the development of the Plan, and need to be at the heart of its delivery. The continued enthusiasm and commitment of the communities that love Gower and are concerned over its future ranging from volunteers on biodiversity and heritage projects to local businesses working to promote sustainable tourism - will be key to the successful implementation of the Plan.

Gower AONB is - and will continue to be – a landscape of change. The Management Plan is vital to ensure that these changes are for the better. I would like to thank all those who were involved in bringing this Plan together and I look forward to working with you in its implementation.

Cllr Paul Lloyd
Chair, Gower AONB Partnership
City and County of Swansea
November 2016

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

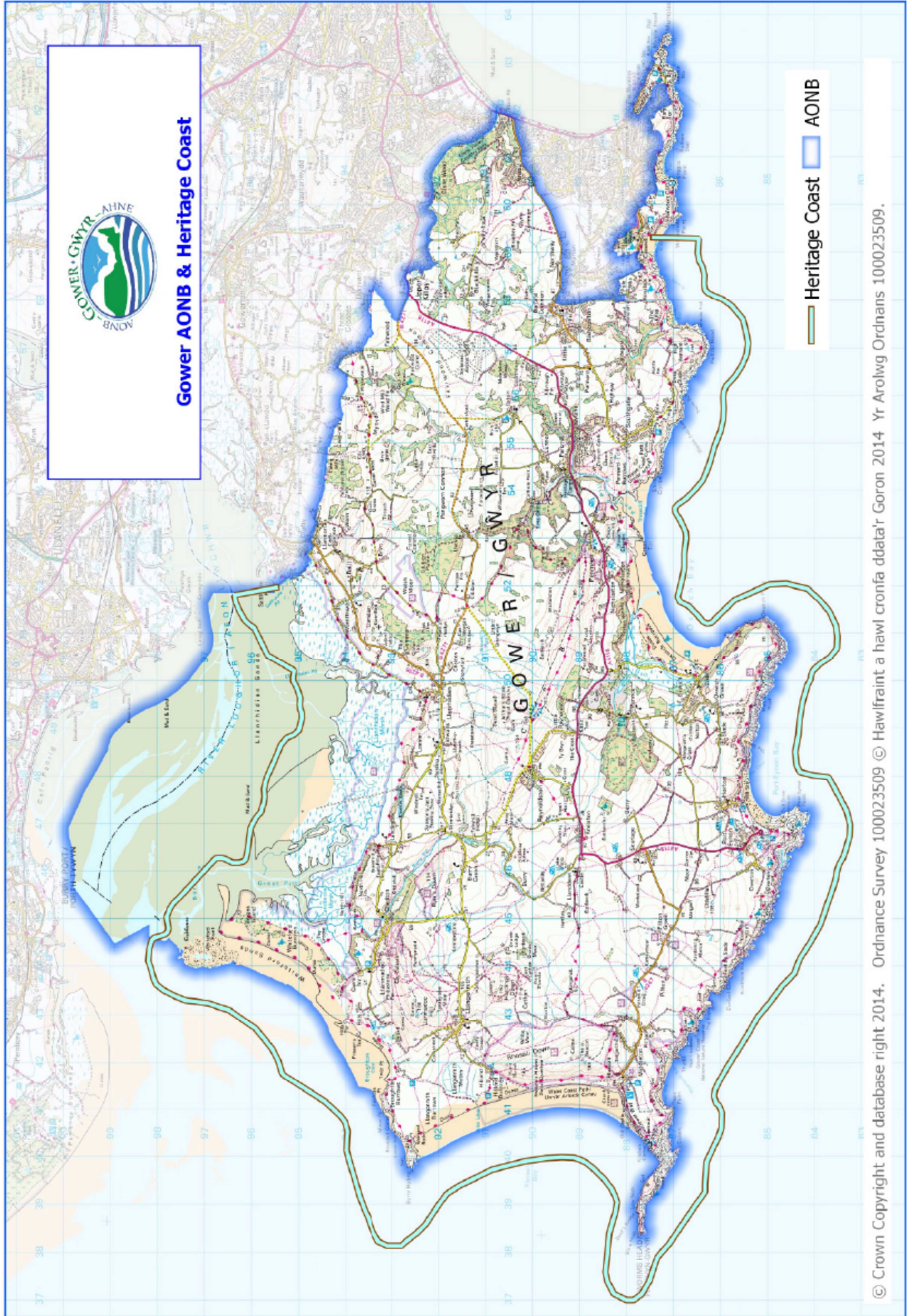
Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 1.0 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are some of the most beautiful and cherished landscapes in Britain. Their distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. AONBs are designated in recognition of this national importance and to ensure that their character and special qualities are protected for all to enjoy. The landscape and scenic beauty of AONBs are of equal importance with National Parks and are internationally recognised as protected areas^[1] by the IUCN.
- 1.1 Chosen for its classic coastline and outstanding natural environment, Gower became the first AONB in the UK in 1956. Gower AONB covers an area of 188 square kilometres (73 square miles (See Map 1), with 59 kilometres (37 miles) of its coastline also designated as Heritage Coast. Except for the small, urbanised north-eastern corner, the entire Gower peninsula is within the AONB. The geology of Gower creates a wide variety of scenery in a relatively small area. It ranges from the south coast's superb carboniferous limestone scenery - between Worms Head and Oxwich Bay - to the salt marshes and dune systems in the north. Inland, the most prominent features are the large areas of common, dominated by sandstone heath ridges including the soaring sweep of Cefn Bryn. Secluded valleys have rich deciduous woodland and the traditional agricultural landscape is a patchwork of fields characterised by walls, stone-faced banks and hedgerows. Although not part of the reason for designation, the AONB also has a rich archaeological and built heritage including over 80 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, nearly 130 listed buildings, and two areas recognised as Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest.
- 1.2 The primary objective for the Gower AONB designation is for the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 requires the City and County of Swansea (CCS) to:
- “take all such actions as appears expedient to them to the accomplishment of the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area...”
- 1.3 In addition, all public bodies have a duty under section 85 of the CRoW Act and must have ‘regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area...’ when exercising their functions.

^[1] Category V of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Protected Areas Categories System – see

http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap_home/gpap_quality/gpap_pacategories/

Map 1



- 1.4 Much of the coastline is owned and managed by public sector and voluntary bodies, particularly the National Trust (who own approximately 70%) – and also:
- CCS
 - Natural Resources Wales (NRW¹); and
 - Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales.
- 1.5 CCS also has an important role as the local planning authority for the AONB - setting planning policy and exercising development control and enforcement under the Town and Country Planning Acts.
- 1.6 The majority of the AONB is in private ownership and management. The AONB designation needs to support the continued sympathetic management by local landowners, farmers and commoners that is essential to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.
- 1.7 The Gower AONB Partnership is the advisory body to the Council regarding the AONB and its management. The Partnership works to support the activity of everyone – local landowners, farmer, businesses, visitors, community groups and individuals - in their conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. The Partnership includes the key stakeholders in the AONB and represent a wide range of interests. Terms of Reference are incorporated into the Council's Constitution, and the Partnership includes CCS Councillors, NRW representatives plus 10 others elected at the Annual Forum.
- 1.8 Heritage Coasts are stretches of outstanding, undeveloped coast in England and Wales that were identified through agreement with local authorities. The protection and management of the Gower Heritage Coast – being entirely within the Gower AONB - is considered as integral to the AONB and this Management Plan.

AONB Management Plans

- 1.9 The CRoW Act 2000 requires the Council to prepare a management plan for the Gower AONB. The requirement is to 'prepare and publish a plan which formulates the policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of the Council's functions in relation to it'. The CRoW Act also requires local authorities to review AONB Management Plans at 5-year intervals.
- 1.10 NRW has published guidance for the preparation and review of plans of AONB management plans^[2]. This plan review has followed that guidance.

¹ As of 1 April 2013, the CCW, Environment Agency Wales and Forestry Commission Wales became Natural Resources Wales/Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru)

^[2] Countryside Council for Wales (2009). Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans in Wales – Guidance on the Review of Management Plans.

- 1.11 In summary, the NRW guidance expects that the management plan will develop and expand on the vision for the AONB and the action needed to conserve and enhance the special qualities for which it has been designated. This will link the special qualities with the underlying social and economic issues, which impact on, or interact with them. The Plan is intended to promote an integrated approach to the planning and management of land at a strategic level. Although the Plan will contain the policies of the local authority, it will also involve stakeholders in developing the vision and explaining how they will help achieve the objectives.
- 1.12 The NRW guidance recommends a five-stage review process for AONB management plans:
- Stage 1 – State of the AONB
 - Stage 2 – Strategy for the AONB
 - Stage 3 – Reporting
 - Stage 4 – Formal Consultation
 - Stage 5 – Monitoring

Gower AONB Management Plan

Management Plan History and Review

- 1.13 Glamorgan County Council prepared a 'Strategy for Gower' in 1973, which identified many features and issues of the time, but was largely a planning policy- orientated document.
- 1.14 Swansea City Council published a first 'management plan' for the AONB in 1990, which addressed the AONB management in a series of topics (e.g. agriculture; common land) and zones (e.g. Caswell/Mumbles Head; Oxwich and Penrice).
- 1.15 Following the CRoW Act requirement for statutory AONB management plans, CCS had the option to review the 1990 Plan, but elected to start again to ensure that contemporary guidance and statutory requirements were followed.
- 1.16 The first statutory Gower AONB Management Plan was adopted by the Council and published in 2006. The plan was the result of wide-ranging consultation, with involvement from stakeholders over more than two years in meetings, focus groups, site visits, presentations and consultations.
- 1.17 This first review of the management plan was initiated in 2010, but has been protracted for a number of reasons. The publication of the Gower AONB Management Plan (2016) has been preceded by review activities, including:
- Statutory notifications letters (to Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Welsh Government) of an intention to review the management plan
 - Stakeholder Workshops (in May 2010) to identify key issues for the Management Plan review

- SEA scoping report and consultation (in autumn 2010) with Cadw, CCW and the Environment Agency (the latter two now combined in NRW); and more recently
- Consultation with the AONB Partnership Steering Group and NRW (in summer 2013) on a draft State of the AONB report
- Public consultation on the draft Management Plan and supporting documentation in 2014/15.

Management Plan Structure

1.18 The management plan retains much of the structure and format of the 2006 Management Plan and includes the following chapters:

Chapter	Purpose
1: Introduction	An overview of: the Gower AONB; AONB management and management planning; links with other plans and strategies
2: Resources	Updates the characteristic of the special qualities of the Gower AONB - including their extent and condition - under four themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural • Cultural • Environmental • Recreation
3: Activities and Pressures	An assessment of the activities and pressures acting on the special qualities of the AONB and how they may change in the future.
4: The Vision	The overall 20-year vision for the AONB, expressing the desirable condition, with specific vision statements for 14 key themes.
5: The Strategy	5-year objectives and policies for each of the 14 key themes
6: Action Plan	A 5-year action plan (2014-18) to achieve the objectives and implement policy.
7: Implementation, Monitoring and Review	Monitoring and review requirements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the implementation of the management plan • reporting on the condition of the AONB special qualities

AONB Management Plan relationship with other Plans

1.19 The relationship between the AONB Management Plan and other plans is important as it articulates the vision for the AONB based on the special qualities and how these will be protected through sustainable development policies. The AONB Management Plan provides the policy reference point for CCS - and other public bodies - to exercise their duties by having regard to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Gower AONB.

1.20. The main policy documents are:

- **The Unitary Development Plan (UDP)** - for the City and County of Swansea provides the adopted planning policy context for development in the area up to 2016. Specific planning policies – that reflect national planning policy and legislation - protect the special qualities of the AONB, and other policies give indirect support to their protection (e.g. biodiversity and built environment policies).
<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=20475>
- **The Local Development Plan (LDP)** - will provide a new development blueprint for the County for the period up to 2025, and will set out how the aspiration for sustainable growth will be delivered. Once adopted, the LDP will replace the UDP. The protection of the natural beauty of the AONB will however remain the primary policy consideration in the new plan. <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=28061>
- **The One Swansea Plan 2013** - is the Single Integrated Plan for Swansea. The overall purpose of this new plan is to make the delivery of services simpler and to ensure that everyone is working towards the same agreed priorities. The Single Integrated Plan replaces the current community strategy and the plans for community safety; health, social care and wellbeing; and children and young people. This plan includes an ambition to protect, enhance and promote Swansea's unique and diverse natural environment.
<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/oneswansea>
- **Time to Change: The Swansea Environment Strategy** – prepared and published by the Swansea Environmental Forum (SEF), this strategy provides a long-term vision and strategic priorities for the natural and built environment in Swansea.
<http://swanseaenvironmentalforum.net/environment-strategy/>
- **Local sector-specific plans and strategies** that interact with or deliver AONB objectives; key examples include:
 - The Swansea Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP):
<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/10113/Swansea-Local-Biodiversity-Action-Plan>

- Countryside Access Plan 2007-2017:
<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/countrysideaccessplan>
 - Swansea Bay Tourism Destination Management Plan:
<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/dmp>
 - Western Wales River Basin Management Plan:
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/125095.aspx>
- 1.21 To be clear, the NRW Guidance recognises that the LDP is a critical aspect in the maintenance of the AONB's special qualities – in that it is through the LDP that development is controlled. The AONB Management Plan does not override the LDP, but is expected to give a clear indication of how LDP policies should address development issues in the AONB.
- 1.22 The Gower AONB Management Plan (2016) is expected to become Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to both the adopted UDP and emerging LDP. Evidence and other outputs from the 2006 Plan (such as the Gower AONB Design Guide 2011) have also been adopted as SPG.
- 1.23 The Gower AONB Management Plan (2016) is expected to become Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the emerging LDP. Evidence and other outputs from the 2006 Plan (such as the Gower AONB Design Guide 2011²) have also been adopted as SPG.
- 1.24 A number of national planning policies/guidance have recently been updated, including Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7, July 2014), Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5: Nature Conservation and Planning, TAN 12: Design and TAN 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space.
- 1.25 In this Plan period, Welsh Government are implementing a significant legislative programme that will have implications for AONB management and governance. The Environment (Wales) Act, Planning (Wales) Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act all have a bearing on AONB Management Plan. There is also an ongoing Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales that has culminated in the Marsden Report and ongoing collaborative work under the Future Landscapes Wales programme³.

² City and County of Swansea (2011). Gower AONB Design Guide. <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/spg>

³ <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/review-designated-landscapes-wales/?lang=en>

CHAPTER 2 RESOURCES

- 2.1 Chapter 2 describes and assesses the current understanding of the special qualities of the AONB, their condition and the forces for change acting on them.
- 2.2 The special qualities are grouped into four themes:

Theme	Special qualities
Natural	Biodiversity
	Geology
	Landscape
	Seascape
Cultural	Archaeology
	Historic Landscapes
	Historic Parks and Gardens
	Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas
Environmental	Air Quality
	Water Quality
	Soil Quality
	Tranquillity
Recreation	Public Rights of Way
	Access Land
	Beaches

- 2.3 The following sections express - for each of the identified special qualities - the following:
- State of the special quality – its nature, character and specifically its extent, condition and why it is important
 - Drivers for change – such as climate change, policy drivers, resource exploitation and recreational pressures

- The trend evident in the condition of the characteristics that have occurred since the preparation of the last Plan
- The changes or trends that are taking place (or could take place in the future) that could lead to a reduction or enhancement of the characteristic
- Potential indicators that could be used to monitor change over the coming five years

Theme: Natural Special Quality: Biodiversity

2.4 The Gower AONB has a highly valued and wide range of habitats and species of priority for conservation in Wales as well as locally important species. The significance of the AONB is recognised through the large number of sites with international, national and local protection.

State of Special Quality

- 2.5 The AONB includes a range of types and extent of designations reflecting the importance of the area for biodiversity. These include:
- Five sites with European and international designations (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites); Special Protection Areas (SPA)
 - National designations (Sites of Special Scientific Interest (20 with biological features) and 3 National Nature Reserves)
 - Other designations and sites (Local Nature Reserves; Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust Reserves; Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Ancient Woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).
- 2.6 The key statutory designated sites (SACs, SPAs and SSSI) are shown on Map 2.
- 2.7 The Swansea Local Biodiversity Action Plan⁴ (LBAP, 2005) sets out a framework for the protection, management, enhancement and promotion of Swansea's natural environment and biodiversity. There are more than 20 priority habitats identified in the LBAP that occur within the AONB and many more priority species.

Drivers for Change

- 2.8 There are 46 candidate Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in the City and County of Swansea, covering 3197ha. SINCs are non-statutory sites which are of importance for nature conservation as they support priority habitats and species for conservation in Wales. Swansea's SINCs have been resurveyed and reverified but there will be ongoing verification of SINCs against new criteria set out within the Wales Biodiversity Partnership's 'Wildlife Sites Guidance Wales' which was published in 2008; when complete this will form an important element of the environmental baseline data for the AONB.
- 2.9 Section 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a biodiversity duty on the all public bodies (including CCS) to have "regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity when exercising its functions." Similarly, the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 places a duty on CCS to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity and

⁴ Swansea Biodiversity Partnership, 2005. Promoting Swansea's Natural Environment: A Local Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted.

2.10 The Wales Biodiversity Partnership has developed Priority Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Action Area Maps to enable Local BAP partners and groups prioritise action on those habitats/species in greatest need of management.

Priority Action Areas relevant to the Gower AONB include:

- South Wales Valleys Marshy Grasslands
- Gower Coast Limestone Grasslands and Heathlands
- Gower Commons
- Gower Arable
- Coastal Soft Cliff
- Welsh Sand Dunes

2.11 The Swansea LBAP is currently under review to encompass changes such as changes in the NERC Section 42 list, new datasets and work on habitat connectivity.

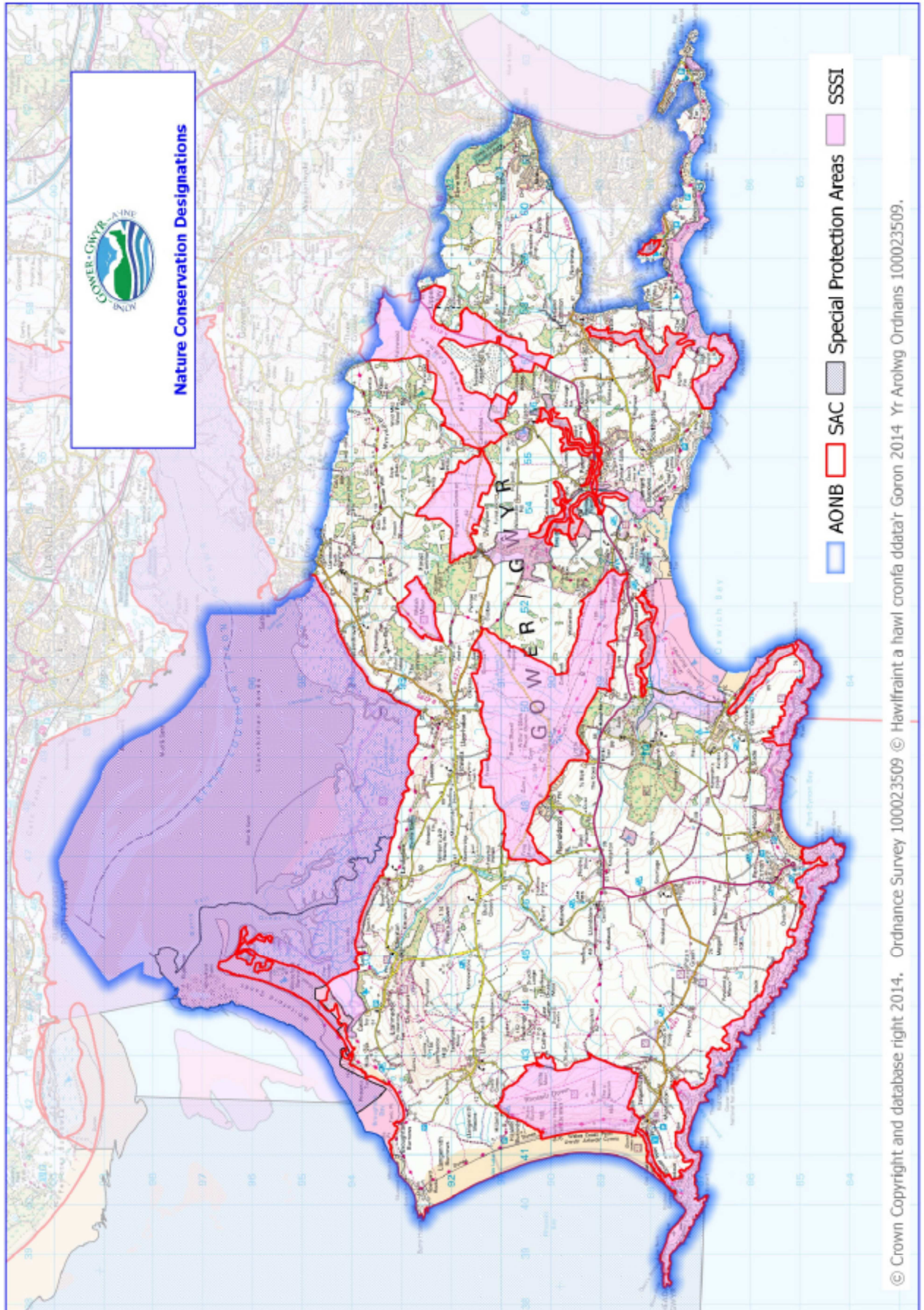
Current and Future Trends

2.12 European and International Designations:

Four of the five SACs within the AONB have core management plans that identify the vision, conservation objectives and performance indicators for each European habitat and species feature. The current view of feature condition (favourable or unfavourable, based on monitoring reports where available), management requirements and action plan are also stated. The remaining SAC - Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries SAC (including the Burry Inlet Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site) - is covered by NRW advice under Regulation 35 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 to relevant authorities (the various statutory authorities and agencies responsible for the European Marine Sites) as to the conservation objectives for the site, and advice on what activities may cause damage or disturbance to the special features. The Relevant Authorities Group has developed a Management Scheme for the site⁵.

⁵ <http://english.cbeems.org/management/management-scheme/>

Map 2



2.13 National Designations:

Of the current 26 SSSIs within the AONB, 20 have biological and geological/geomorphological features of interest (the remaining sites are geological/geomorphological SSSIs). There is no summary assessment of the condition of these features across the AONB, but key summary issues affecting SACs/SSSI include:

- Over- and/or under-grazing;
- scrub encroachment;
- sustainable management of common land; and
- management of invasive/non-native species

2.14 Other Designations:

There is no current information on current condition or trends affecting other designated sites. As described above, the CCS Nature Conservation Team has reviewed the current suite of SINCs in the County.

2.15 Biodiversity - Habitats and Species:

Compared to many other parts of Wales, Gower is relatively free of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) at present, but is vulnerable to future invasions (either deliberate, accidental or natural) due to its wide range of habitats. There are several INNS recorded on Gower; some examples of known species and areas at risk include:

- Cotoneaster and Holm Oak on the South Gower Cliffs
- Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed from Three Cliffs Bay up to Parkmill and Ilston
- *Crassula helmsii* in Broadpool

2.16 Other species include *Montbretia*, Hottentot Fig, and *Sedum album*. As well as threats to habitats, INNS are also potential risks to many of the other special qualities of the AONB, e.g. historic sites and features.

2.17 The recent rapid spread of tree diseases - such as Ash Die-back – has raised the profile of biosecurity issues affecting land management in the UK. Ash is the dominant tree species in many of the Gower native woodlands; significant losses of mature ash trees would have impacts for the biodiversity and landscape character of the AONB.

2.18 Longer term effects of predicted climate change on the key habitats and species of the AONB have not been assessed.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.19

- Favourable conservation status of European designated sites within the AONB
- Condition of biological SSSI features within the AONB.
- Condition reporting for the SINC sites within the AONB
- LBAP progress monitoring through the Biodiversity Action Reporting System
- Extent/Distribution of INNS

Theme: Natural Special Quality: Geology

State of the Special Quality

- 2.20 The AONB includes a wide range of sites important for their geology and geomorphology, reflecting the variety of geology within the area. Key features can be grouped into:
- Coastal cliff sections in Carboniferous Limestone (with associated fossils)
 - Quaternary deposits and landforms e.g. solifluction terraces overlying small remnants of 'raised beaches', cave sediments with associated fossils
 - Coastal geomorphology (e.g. cliffs, wave-cut platforms, beaches and extensive dune systems)
 - Karst scenery (e.g., dry valleys sinkholes and resurgences, cave systems)
 - Old Red sandstone ridges and associated rock exposures

Drivers for Change

- 2.21 The UDP includes planning policies that protect and enhance SSSIs and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS). No RIGS sites were formally adopted by the UDP, although these are now being considered through the emerging LDP.
- 2.22 The British Geological Survey (BGS) has published information on RIGS in Swansea. The report identifies RIGS assessment criteria and a set of nine sites proposed for designation as RIGS, eight of which are within the AONB. Further work is required to identify, and evaluate a full suite of RIGS across Swansea.
- 2.23 The Stop Waste in Our Landscape Project was a partnership project highlighting to landowners how the insensitive depositing and use of waste materials – such as building rubble or unwanted soil – can cause irreversible damage to the AONB geological, landscape and heritage features, wildlife and the environment. Relatively small incidents are difficult to detect, monitor and regulate, but may have significant cumulative effects.

Current and Future Trends

- 2.24 Of the current 26 SSSIs within the AONB, 15 have some geological or geomorphological features of interest; some of these are of international importance to geological science. There is no published summary assessment of the condition of geological SSSI features across the AONB. Recent consideration by NRW on this matter indicates that these features are generally in favourable condition. However, there are several issues that are raising concern, including:
- Human disturbance to cave features and the need for comprehensive cataloguing and curation of cave finds

- Human disturbance and natural erosion damaging geological exposures
- Tree and other vegetative growth obscuring geological exposures that are valuable for study and research

2.25 In the longer-term, sea level rise as a consequence of climate change is also likely to affect some of the coastal geological features of the AONB, as well as some of the cave systems and their underground drainage.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.26

- Condition assessments of Geological SSSI features
- The BGS RIGS report presents good information the identified RIGs sites that could form a suitable baseline for condition monitoring.

Theme: Natural Special Quality: Landscape

2.27 The quality and variety of Gower's landscape, contained in such a small area, is the essence and original reason for its designation as an AONB - the highest UK designation in terms of landscape and scenic beauty (being of equivalent status to National Parks in this regard). The coastline is also designated as Heritage Coast – recognised as one of the most outstanding stretches of undeveloped coastline in England and Wales.

Status of the Special Quality

2.28 Gower is one of the 48 regional-scale landscape character areas identified by NRW⁶. The Gower landscape has its own distinctive sense of place; its landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape have been recorded and evaluated into a nationally consistent data set.

2.29 LANDMAP is the method used to assess the importance and value of a landscape in Wales. The LANDMAP study for Swansea identified nine landscape character types within the Gower AONB. LANDMAP has now informed the preparation and publication of a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the AONB⁷. This systematic assessment identifies and describes 40 Landscape Character Areas within the AONB. Each character area description includes:

- Special qualities and key characteristics;
- Management guidelines; and
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Drivers for Change

2.30 Implementation of the 2006 Plan delivered specific UDP policies that protect the natural beauty of the AONB from inappropriate development; the AONB Design Guide has been developed and published as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

2.31 The Review of Designated Landscapes in Wales culminated in a series of recommendations in the Marsden Report and there is ongoing collaborative work under the Future Landscapes Wales programme.

Current and Future Trends

2.32 The LCA now provides a suitable objective baseline against which to assess future landscape change in each of the 40 character areas.

⁶ Land Use Consultants and Sheffield University for Countryside Council for Wales. (2007). Landscape Character Map for Wales.. See: <http://www.ccw.gov.uk/idoc.ashx?docid=dc3096a3-4149-409d-8a45-50ffc1ad72b4&version=-1>.

⁷ Gower Landscape Partnership (2013). Gower Landscape Character Assessment. <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=50163>

- 2.33 Current evidence to assess the scale of landscape change is limited. Updates to LANDMAP data are expected to be completed for Gower within this plan period and may assist in identify change and trends. Although the AONB remains largely unaffected by significant or large scale developments, landscapes and key features remain vulnerable to small-scale and gradual changes that may lead to cumulative effects over time; these effects are difficult to quantify and address.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

- 2.34 A series of fixed-point photomonitoring locations was undertaken in 2007/8 to start monitoring the landscape of the AONB; this photography has yet to be repeated. A detailed series of oblique aerial photographs have also been taken of the AONB and are available for non-commercial use⁸.
- 2.35 The principle of fixed point photomonitoring repeated every few years is a valuable one. However, the methodology and results of the 2007/8 monitoring may be difficult to replicate and do not provide a full and objective programme to provide evidence of landscape change across the AONB. A revised photomonitoring programme is proposed, building on the LCA and progress made on photomonitoring methodology in other AONBs.

⁸ <http://www.pixaerial.com/>

Theme: Natural Special Quality: Seascape

2.35 With 70km of coastline, seascape is an important aspect of the AONB character. Most of the coastline is also designated as Heritage Coast. Many of the classic views of Gower – such as Rhossili, Worm’s Head, and Three Cliffs Bay - feature the coastline and the sea beyond. Less well known are the views of the coast from the sea. All these components make significant contributions to the special qualities of the AONB.

Status of The Special Quality

2.36 A Welsh Seascapes assessment (NRW, 2009⁹) focussed on the visual or scenic aspect of the coastline, but also provided context with reference to the geological, land use, historic and cultural aspects. The study also assessed the sensitivity of each seascape to selected offshore development types.

2.37 The seascape survey provided a valuable baseline description of the seascape around the AONB coast. Seascape region summaries from the report that are relevant to Gower are included in Annex 1 and include:

- 43 – Loughor Estuary
- 44 – Whiteford Point to Worms Head – Rhossili Bay
- 45 – Worms Head to Mumbles – South Gower

Drivers for Change

2.38 Marine Planning has been significantly restructured since the introduction of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The Act includes a new system of marine planning that will cover all key marine activities. The marine planning system will guide and direct decision makers and sea users towards a more sustainable use of the sea; ensuring a strong link between policy and individual developments and activities.

2.39 The UK Marine Policy Statement sets out the policy framework for UK seas and provides the context for developing Marine Plans. Marine plans will provide more detailed policy and guidance at a country or regional level. Responsibilities for marine planning arising from the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 lie with Welsh Government. The marine plans will set out policies for sustainable development in the Welsh marine environment.

2.40 The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 also include a new marine licensing system that consolidates and modernises the existing consenting regimes.

2.41 Proposals for the Atlantic Array windfarm have been withdrawn by the developer. However, other renewable energy developments coming forward in the Bristol Channel have the potential to affect the seascape and key views from the AONB.

⁹ Countryside Council for Wales (2009). Welsh seascapes and their sensitivity to offshore developments. <http://www.ccgc.gov.uk/landscape--wildlife/protecting-our-landscape/seascapes/seascape-assessment-of-wales.aspx>

2.42 Around the coast, the Lavernock Point to St Ann's Head Shoreline Management Plan provides a large-scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal erosion and flooding. The SMP also presents policies to help manage these risks to people and to the developed, historic and natural environment in a sustainable manner. The current plan (SMP2) identifies policy approaches for coastal management sections around the AONB.

Current and Future Trends

2.43 Current evidence to assess the scale of seascape change is limited, although the AONB coast and seascape is expected to be sensitive to future change from:

- Offshore developments
- The effects of climate change and sea level rise
- Implementation of active coastal flood/erosion management policies/projects
- Recreational uses

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

- An appropriate monitoring methodology for seascape needs to be considered and developed. This will need to be well linked to any fixed point photomonitoring/landscape character assessment monitoring.

Theme: Cultural Special Quality: Archaeology

Status of Special Quality

- 2.44 There are 83 Scheduled Monuments in the AONB, and many other archaeological sites and records, representing most periods – from Upper Palaeolithic caves (and some of the earliest human remains in the UK) through to eighteenth century parklands and industrial heritage.
- 2.45 Summary information on the condition of Scheduled Ancient Monuments is available from Cadw, as the Field Monument Wardens visit SAMs regularly and produce a report on their condition.

Drivers for Change

- 2.46 National policies (in Planning Policy Wales, Chapter Six: Conserving the Historic Environment, Eighth Edition January 2016) and current UDP policies protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) and sites on the Historic Environment Record (HER) from harmful development, including unscheduled sites. The HER is a charitable Trust within Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT). The emerging LDP will be expected to include similar policies. Scheduled Monument consent is also required for other activities that may affect them, but these sites are still potentially at risk from e.g. erosion from recreational uses and other third party activities.
- 2.47 The current statutory framework protecting the historic environment and guidance documents for its implementation include:
- The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016
 - Welsh Office Circular 60/96 Planning and the Environment
 - Welsh Office Circular 61/96 Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas
 - Guide to Good Practice on Using the Register of landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales in the Planning and Development Process (Second Edition, Cadw 2007).
- 2.48 Cadw published a set of Conservation Principles in 2011, intended as a guide to the protection and management of the historic environment. Cadw strongly encourages local authorities to use these in their decision making. The six principles are:
- Historic assets will be managed to sustain their values.
 - Understanding the significance of historic assets is vital.
 - The historic environment is a shared resource.
 - Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.
 - Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent.
 - Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.

- 2.49 Whether a feature is Scheduled or not, sympathetic management by owners and land managers of archaeological features is key to their protection.
- 2.50 Factors likely to impact (both adversely and beneficially) on the archaeological resource include:
- Inappropriate development and utilities works
 - Unsympathetic land management activities
 - Recreational activities
 - Scrub and vegetation encroachment
 - Lack of public awareness
 - Climate change e.g. sea level rise, site erosion or damage to peats and dune systems, much of which contain archaeological remains and fragile palaeoenvironmental evidence
 - agricultural & forestry works (e.g. turf growing/cutting for sale, ploughing, drainage, planting & felling);
 - creation of caravan & camping sites with services and hardstanding
 - public access arrangements such as footpaths and open country (information boards, erosion – including cycling/vehicular off-roading, vandalism and theft) can change the numbers visiting archaeologically sensitive sites.
- 2.52 The Historic Environment Strategy (Second edition, 2013) sets out the Welsh Government's vision for the historic environment. Welsh Government has consulted on changes to heritage protection, with the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill, now making its passage through the National Assembly. Implementation of the Bill will impact on the management of heritage assets in Wales.
- 2.53 Initiatives in other Welsh protected landscapes include the development of 'local lists' and may be a way forward in protecting Gower's heritage. Local Lists recognise the value and significance of locally important heritage sites to the landscape and local communities. Producing a Local List gives a voice to local communities, helping to formally identify and recognise the heritage assets that are important to the local area and its people. Local Lists celebrate local heritage and ensure that it is appreciated and valued.

Current and Future Trends

- 2.54 Cadw holds information on trends affecting the condition of SAMs, but there is very little information available relating to trends affecting non-scheduled archaeological sites/resource across the AONB.
- 2.55 A report for Cadw has recently explored the direct impacts of climate change on the historic environment of Wales. Across Wales, Historic Landscapes are predicted to be most at risk from climate change. Next stages of work are to address the need for an improved and locally accurate evidence base of which historic assets could be at risk and where.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.56

- Condition of SAMs - Cadw Field Monument Wardens make regular visits to SAMs
- Condition of HER sites - some HER sites have been visited with Trusted community groups, and projects such as Glastir, Arfordir, and participation in the Gower Landscapes Project

Theme: Cultural Special Quality: Historic Landscapes

2.57 The best examples of different types of historic landscapes in Wales have been included on the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales. Gower is one of the most archaeologically rich areas in Wales.

Status of Special Quality

2.58 The two best surviving and most complete archaeologically rich areas of the peninsula (West Gower and Cefn Bryn) have been identified on the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales. These two areas cover approximately 30% of the AONB.

2.59 The Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) completed an historic landscape character assessment of the entire AONB in 2006. This has been supplemented by a characterisation of North East Gower to cover an area peripheral to the AONB around Crofty and Penclawdd. These studies have informed the development of the LCA (see Landscape, above) and the proposed management guidelines.

Drivers for Change

2.60 The Historic Environment Strategy and the Historic Environment (Wales) Act (see Archaeology, above) may bring significant changes to how areas on the Register of Historic Landscapes are protected and managed.

2.61 Current UDP policies do not permit development that would harm the character of the Historic Landscapes; the emerging LDP is expected to adopt similar policies.

Current and Future Trends

2.62 Current weaknesses, threats and opportunities – and management guidelines - are outlined in the LCA (see Landscape, above). Management guidelines emphasise the need for continuing the safeguarding and management of common land and maintaining traditional boundary features such as hedges and banks.

2.63 The report for the Historic Environment Group¹⁰ on the direct impacts of climate change suggests that historic landscapes will be the historic asset most affected by climate change in Wales.

¹⁰Powell, J., Murphy, K., Ings, M., and Chambers, F.M. (2012) A strategic approach for assessing and addressing the potential impact of climate change on the historic environment of Wales, Report to Historic Environment Group – Climate Change Subgroup. CCRI: Gloucester
<http://www.ccri.ac.uk/cadwrepor/>

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.64

- Condition of Historic Landscapes

Theme: Cultural Special Quality: Historic Parks and Gardens

2.65 The Cadw Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales includes those Parks and Gardens considered to be of national importance.

Status of Special Quality

2.66 The AONB includes five sites on the Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Interest in Wales:

- Clyne Castle
- Fairy Hill
- Kilvrough Manor
- Penrice Castle
- Stouthall

Drivers for Change

2.67 Entry on the Register aims to avoid damage to significant features of the sites, such as historic layout, structure, built features and planted elements. It is not the intention to preserve everything as it is; in fact, in many cases development is both benign and beneficial. However, it is important not to let insensitive development harm the historic and visual character of historic parks and gardens.

2.68 Sympathetic management by owners and land managers of these parks and gardens is key to their maintenance.

2.69 The Historic Environment Strategy (Second edition, 2013) sets out the Welsh Government's vision for the historic environment. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 will impact on the management of heritage assets in Wales.

2.70 Current UDP policies do not permit development that would harm the character of the Historic Parks and Gardens or affect their 'essential settings'. The emerging LDP is expected to adopt similar policies.

Current and Future Trends

2.71 Information on the current condition of the five sites on the Register is not available.

Monitoring and Indicators

2.72

- Condition of Historic Parks and Gardens - Cadw

Theme: Cultural Special Quality: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas

- 2.73 Listed Buildings are structures officially recognised by Cadw as being of special architectural, historical or cultural significance. Buildings are either Grade I, II* or II – dependent on their importance- with Grade I being the most important. Landmark buildings and structures – castles, churches, large houses and traditional long houses – add features to the Gower landscape.
- 2.74 Conservation Areas are designated by local planning authorities for their special architectural and historic interest. Conservation areas define village envelopes and include the buildings and spaces within them that contribute to the village character.

Status of Special Quality

- 2.75 There are 131 listed buildings (4 Grade I; 22 Grade II*; and 105 Grade II) and 17 Conservation Areas in the AONB.

Drivers for Change

- 2.76 The Historic Environment (Wales) Act (see Archaeology, above) may bring significant changes to how Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas are protected and managed.
- 2.77 Current UDP policies do not permit development that would harm the character of historic buildings and Conservation Areas. Where proposals for improving historic assets (including listed buildings), consultation should be made with Cadw; the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales and GGAT.
- 2.78 CCS is preparing a strategy to tackle the issue of 'at risk' listed buildings across the City and County; this has identified that eight listed buildings within Gower are considered to be at risk. CCS is considering the use of statutory powers alongside potential grant funding to start tackling what has been a long running problem.
- 2.79 Many of the Conservation Areas on Gower were declared in the 1970s and 1980s; none of them have current Character Appraisals or Management Plans. The AONB Design Guide does provide guidance for built development in the AONB. The Guide includes individual 'Settlement Statements' that highlight key characteristics for each settlement, with a description of prevalent materials and detailing.
- 2.80 The CCS is reviewing their Conservation Areas, but with 31 across the authority area, Conservation Areas on Gower are unlikely to be reviewed for a number of years. In the meantime development control decisions must be made on a case by case basis using the 'preserve or enhance' test. This draws on the expertise of the Design and Conservation Team.

2.81 The Historic Environment Strategy (2012) sets out the Welsh Government's vision for the historic environment. Implementation of the Bill Historic Environment (Wales) Act will impact on the management of heritage assets in Wales.

Current and Future Trends

2.82 A 'Buildings at Risk' survey of Listed Buildings was undertaken during 2007-08. Of 515 Listed Buildings surveyed in the wider Swansea area, 7.7% were assessed as 'at risk'. An informal listed building at risk review in 2012 indicates that this trend is worsening with approximately 8.9% of listed buildings now being considered to be at risk.

2.83 The main reason for vulnerability of listed buildings in Gower is because many are structures with no income generation potential and this leads to a general neglect and lack of maintenance.

2.84 Anecdotal evidence and recent Conservation Area consent casework history suggest a slow deteriorating trend in their condition. However - without objective and contemporary Character Appraisals or Management Plans - there is no objective evidence to identify trends in the condition of Conservation Areas across the AONB.

2.85 The recent report for the Historic Environment Group¹¹ on the direct impacts of climate change highlights the following potential future problems, including:

- insect infestation and fungal growth in warmer, more humid conditions;
- structural problems, for example, caused by soils shrinkage in hotter, drier summers;
- dilapidation to stonework caused by more frequent freezing/thawing;
- damage as a result of extreme weather; and
- the thermal movement of materials such as slate, lead, timber and paintwork

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

- 2.86
- Condition of Listed Buildings
 - Condition of Conservation Areas

¹¹Powell, J., Murphy, K., Ings, M., and Chambers, F.M. (2012) A strategic approach for assessing and addressing the potential impact of climate change on the historic environment of Wales, Report to Historic Environment Group – Climate Change Subgroup. CCRI: Gloucester
<http://www.ccri.ac.uk/cadwrepor/>

Theme: Environmental Special Quality: Air Quality

2.87 Air Quality is important to the sensory perception of the AONB, the physical well-being of inhabitants and visitors, vegetation, flora and fauna.

Status of the Special Quality

2.88 CCS reviews, monitors and reports on air quality across Swansea to comply with the Environment Act 1995 and other Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) policy and technical guidance.

2.89 Air Quality monitoring tends to be undertaken in areas where known pollution sources are likely cause exceedance levels of prescribed threshold levels for key air pollutants. Gower AONB is not seriously affected by sources of pollution such as built-up areas, industrial sites and major roads with high traffic volumes.

2.90 A limited amount of empirical data is therefore available on air quality. Surveys of roadside Nitrogen Dioxide levels in 1985-6 and 1996-7 found levels to be well within maximum acceptable limits.

Drivers for Change, Current and Future Trends

2.91 The latest LAQM report indicates that there are no local air quality management issues affecting the AONB. Air quality in the AONB is likely to remain good for the foreseeable future.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.92 CCS will continue to review, monitor and report on air quality across the County in compliance with Welsh LAQM regulation, strategy and policy: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/2831/Air-quality>

Theme: Environmental Special Quality: Water Quality

2.93 Water quality is important for bathing beaches and nature conservation. Good water quality supports quiet recreation and a variety of terrestrial and marine wildlife. Sandy beaches and clean water are important features of the recreation resource and for the tourism industry.

Status of Special Quality

2.94 NRW is the competent authority with regard to water quality and the Water Framework Directive issues in Wales. The AONB is within the Western Wales River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) area. The RBMP identifies all significant inland and coastal waterbodies in the AONB, and sets environmental quality objectives for each.

2.95 The RBMP identifies the larger inland and coastal waterbodies in the AONB, and sets environmental quality objectives for each. The RBMP classifies waterbodies into these categories:

- Rivers
- Lakes
- Transitional (Estuarine)
- Coastal; and
- Groundwater

2.96 The following table indicates the current status of each waterbody within/adjacent to the AONB.

Waterbody Classification	No. of type in AONB	Current Status	Good Ecological Status Objective to be achieved by:
Rivers	14	2 Poor 6 Moderate 6 Good	7 by 2015 7 by 2027
Lakes	0	--	--
Transitional	1	Moderate	2027
Coastal	3	2 Moderate 1 Good	1 by 2015 2 by 2027
Groundwater	2	1 Good 1 Moderate	1 by 2015 1 by 2027

2.97 There is also a range of smaller pools, ponds and watercourses not featured in the RBMP – such as Broad Pool and Oxwich Marsh - that are important components of the AONB landscape, but are outside the scope of the RBMP. There is no summary information on the extent or condition of these smaller features.

2.98 Bathing Waters are subject to a discrete and specific water quality monitoring regime. All seven of the Gower AONB beaches tested have met the Higher Bathing Water Quality Standard every year for the period 2010-2012.

Current and Future Trends

- 2.99 Bathing water is subject to influences outside of the AONB – particularly discharges from the nearby conurbations (Swansea and Llanelli). Over recent years, huge improvements have been made to the quality, frequency and regulation of point source discharges into bathing waters. Further improvements may be needed in order to meet the requirements of the revised Bathing Water Directive. This is likely to involve actions and initiatives tackling more diffuse/cumulative pollution sources e.g. from agricultural diffuse pollution and septic tanks. Work is ongoing to understand and address these issues.
- 2.100 There is little information available around water resource management issues on Gower. Limestone bedrock on Gower retains water and is recognised as Principal Aquifer. Groundwater is an important resource and supports surface water flows and wetland ecosystems. Issues around resident/visitor water demand/supply and climate change may have future impacts on water resources in the AONB. Plans for further development outside the sewered areas in Gower is often accompanied by pressure to allow the proliferation of septic tank and package plant sewage treatment systems. In limestone areas this carries a significant risk of pollution to groundwater.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.101

- Bathing Water - quality of designated Bathing Waters
- WFD compliance (including shellfish waters compliance)
- Good Ecological Status of water bodies, through the RBMP.
- Bathing Water Quality annual monitoring.

Theme: Environmental Special Quality: Soil Quality

2.102 Soil exerts a strong influence on our whole ecosystem, being the foundation for many of the ecosystem services and functions recognised; soil is a fragile resource that needs to be understood and protected. Soil quality affects land use and landscape and the Gower AONB contains a significant amount of better quality agricultural land.

Status of Special Quality

2.103 In the 2006 Plan, information and data on soil quality in the AONB was limited to the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC, 1977), which classified agricultural land into Grades 1-5. All of these grades are represented within the AONB. The 2006 plan identified generic factors affecting soil condition.

2.104 Further information on soils is now available from the National Soil Resources Institute (NSRI) - responsible for holding and disseminating soils information in England and Wales. Developed by Cranfield University and sponsored by Defra, the NSRI Soilscape¹² viewer provides a summary description of the soils at specified locations across England and Wales. The map displays the soilscape and soil descriptions for the specified location, as well as a number of the more interesting soil characteristics, including summary soil texture, drainage status, soil fertility, and commonly associated habitat and land cover.

Drivers for Change

2.105 Agricultural and other land management practices have the biggest influence on soil quality in the AONB. These practices are driven in part by livestock and produce market prices, agricultural policy and subsidies.

2.106 The Water Framework Directive and actions in the River Basin Management Plan (see Water Quality, above) are focussing on tackling diffuse pollution of minor watercourses arising from agricultural practices – primarily contamination associated with increased nitrate levels because of agricultural run off.

2.107 The UDP has policies to protect the ‘best and most versatile’ agricultural land (ALC grades 1-3a); a similar policy is expected to be applied in the emerging LDP.

Current and Future Trends

2.108 The generic land management and water protection risks and issues for the soil types found on Gower include:

- Nutrient enrichment and siltation of streams from soil erosion
- Groundwater contamination with nitrate
- Soil erosion along footpaths or from burnt areas

¹² <https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscape/>

- Gripping or overgrazing can lead to accelerated run-off and erosion
- Overland flow (of organic slurry, fertiliser, pathogens or fine sediment in suspension/solution) from compacted or poached fields

2.109 However, there is no direct evidence of any substantial issues or trends in soil quality within the AONB.

2.110 The Stop Waste in Our Landscape Project (see 2.46, Archaeology) is also relevant to soil quality in the AONB.

2.111 The 2006 Plan references a potential issue with an increase in the lifting of pasture for turf – which may lead to soil erosion and loss of soil structure over time. However, there is no information to assess trends or the potential effects of this on soil quality in the AONB.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.112 No monitoring requirements identified.

Theme: Environmental Special Quality: Tranquillity

2.113 Gower is one of the few remaining areas in South Wales where the countryside is relatively undisturbed by noise and visual intrusion. There is also an absence of ‘sky glow’ caused by light pollution.

Status of Special Quality

2.114 A 1997 survey undertaken by ASH Consulting Group for Countryside Council for Wales¹³ (CCW) identified the AONB as being an area “usually free of any substantial daytime disturbance”. The survey also identified the absence of sky glow caused by light pollution as an indicator of tranquillity.

2.115 In 2009, CCW commissioned Land Use Consultants¹⁴ (LUC) to reassess tranquillity in Wales by updating the 1997 research and allowing a comparison to be made of the changes in tranquillity within the 12-year period. Data for the City and County of Swansea was incomplete in the 1997 survey, but – even taking this into account – the 2009 survey indicated a slight reduction in extent of tranquil areas within the local authority area. The results for Swansea are shown in the table below.

Zone	1997		2009	
	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
Tranquil	126.29	29.98	124.52	29.56
Zone B - Countryside subject to significant traffic intrusion and other disturbance	187.54	44.52	221.70	52.64
Zone C - Countryside somewhat disturbed by light traffic	70.17	16.66	74.97	17.80
All disturbed (Zone B + C)	257.70	61.18	296.68	70.44
No data	37.20	8.83	n/a	n/a

Drivers for Change

2.116 There has been good progress with the actions and objectives from 2006 Plan – the AONB Lighting Scheme Guidance¹⁵ and the Gower AONB Design

¹³ ASH Consulting Group (1997) Tranquil Areas Wales – A Report to the Countryside Council for Wales.

¹⁴ Land Use Consultants (2009). Tranquil Areas Wales Map, 2009. Prepared by Land Use Consultants for Countryside Council for Wales.

¹⁵ City and County of Swansea (2010). Lighting Scheme Guidance for Gower AONB.

<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=41674>

Guide¹⁶ have both been published as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in response to the issue.

- 2.117 Development pressures continue to affect the AONB, including developments/lighting schemes from outside of the AONB affecting the dark skies of the AONB e.g. from urban Swansea and Llanelli. There are also concerns that minor lighting projects on existing individual properties in the AONB have the potential for cumulative impacts on dark sky.
- 2.118 Higher levels of noise around e.g. main roads and sporadic bursts of noise from military aircraft and watercraft such as jet skis and speedboats continue to disturb the tranquillity of the AONB.
- 2.119 There is a growing International Dark Sky Movement that increases the profile and importance of dark skies e.g. Brecon Beacons National Park has been declared an International Dark Sky Reserve.
- 2.120 The Noise Action Plan for Wales¹⁷ recognises that ‘...a range of tranquil environments is likely to be beneficial, from the brief escape to an urban oasis.....to a more demanding challenge in the great outdoors further afield.’ The Action Plan recommends that NRW ‘consider whether there is a case for further rounds of rural tranquil areas mapping and the method to be used in any such mapping’.

Current and Future Trends

- 2.121 The all-Wales surveys of tranquillity do not indicate any real change in the extent of tranquil areas of the AONB; however, with no local specific survey undertaken for tranquillity or dark sky, it is not possible to reach any firm conclusion on an underlying trend.
- 2.122 With time, development pressures are likely to cause a slow deterioration in tranquillity and Dark Night Skies – both from within AONB and around its periphery.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

- 2.123 Tranquillity – A local survey (detailed methodology to be determined) should allow for specific nature of Gower but also consistency with national/other surveys. The survey should be repeatable every 5 years and should have good integration with any future proposed pan-Wales mapping.

¹⁶ City and County of Swansea (2011) Gower AONB Design Guide.
<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=42737>

¹⁷ Welsh Government (2013). A Noise Action Plan for Wales 2013-2018.
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/noiseandnuisance/environmentalnoise/noisemonitoringmapping/noise-action-plan/?lang=en>

2.124 Dark sky assessments – The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) have guidance and can advise on the requirements – typically using light meter readings, photography; Bortle-scale qualitative assessments¹⁸.

¹⁸ <http://www.darksky.org/night-sky-conservation/269>

2.125 There is extensive public access to the countryside and coast in the AONB and the path network is an important resource for visitors and the tourism industry. Much of the path network is bounded lanes and historical routes and some are important landscape features.

Status of the Special Quality

2.126 The CCS Countryside Access team undertake annual monitoring of the condition of the Rights of Way network across the county. The monitoring involves random sampling of approximately 10% of the network to determine which paths are ‘easy to use’. Analysis of the results over a number of years can indicate an improving/declining trend in the condition of the network.

2.127 Monitoring results for the path network within the AONB are summarised in the table below:

Year	Network length within the AONB	Proportion in usable and accessible condition	Based on a survey sample length (and proportion of AONB network) of
2008	402.0 km	63.2 %	31.8 km (7.90%)
2009	402.0 km	51.6 %	42.8 km (10.65%)
2010	402.0 km	62.8 %	35.7 km (8.88%)
2011	412.1 km	65.8 %	31.1 km (7.56%)
2012	414.9 km	80.2 %	48.7 km (11.73%)
2013	414.9 km	69.9 %	45.0 km (10.84%)

2.128 The Wales Coast Path officially opened in May 2012, and has become a significant resource and recognised tourism asset. There has been capital funding to develop the Coast Path and the rights of way network in the coastal zone. Recognition of the Wales Coast Path within the AONB as a key tourism asset should assist in maintaining its profile for investment and management.

2.129 The 35-mile Gower Way crosses both the AONB and the Mawr area of the old Lordship of Gower. There are also a small number of permissive access routes provided by landowners; these can form important additions to the Rights of Way network.

Drivers for Change

2.130 The Swansea Local Access Forum¹⁹ advises the local authority on the improvement of public access to the countryside for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area. Improvements to countryside access – for all users - are delivered through the City and County of Swansea Countryside Access Plan (2007-17). Key actions in the plan include:

- Wales Coast Path Development Programme

¹⁹ <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/6194/Local-access-forum>

- Increasing the promoted routes for walkers and other users
- Increasing connectivity of the path network
- The Community Path Improvement Programme
- Improving the path network so that 75% of it is 'easy to use'
- Publication of a new definitive map

2.131 The overall target of the Countryside Access Plan is to ensure that 75% of the path network - across the entire county - is easy to use. The AONB Management Plan has a specifically elevated target of ensuring that 95% of the path network in the AONB is of 'easy to use' standard.

2.132 Continued resources for maintaining the path network are required, because even recently improved routes will deteriorate over time – e.g. from the level and nature of use, erosion, vegetation growth and obstructions.

2.133 There may be further resources available for making improvements to the Coast Path, but there will be continued restricted resources available for maintaining path network in the AONB as open and easily accessible.

2.134 As a wider issue, recreational use of the AONB may already be changing. There are more visitors and more people participating in a wider range of activities in the AONB – e.g. walking, wildlife watching, cycling, surfing, windsurfing and hand-gliding. Without some level of mutual understanding between different users, some activities may lead to localised conflicts e.g. fishing and kayaking.

2.135 The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013²⁰ made it a legal requirement for local authorities to map and plan for suitable routes for active travel, and to build and improve their infrastructure for walking and cycling every year. It creates new duties for highways authorities to consider the needs of walkers and cyclists and make better provision for them. It also requires both the Welsh Government and local authorities to promote walking and cycling as a mode of transport.

2.136 The provisions in the Act requiring the production and publication of maps and to make year on year improvements to infrastructure will only apply to particular areas where there is potential for active travel to be a well-used mode of transport. Welsh Government is consulting on where these proposed areas may be; as well as the main urban areas of Swansea, some of the larger settlements in the AONB e.g. Southgate and Murton have also been proposed.

2.137 The Welsh Government has also announced a review of existing legislation and guidance relating to access and outdoor recreation²¹. The aim is to

²⁰ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/transport/integrated/walkingcycling/activetravelact/?lang=en>

²¹

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/countrysidecoastalaccess/review-of-access-and-outdoor-recreation-legislation/?lang=en>

secure better access to the outdoors for recreation, modernise and simplify the current regulatory framework, and provide clarity and certainty over where people can go and what they can do there.

Current and Future Trends

2.138 The overall target of the Countryside Access Plan is to ensure that 75% of the path network - across the entire county - is easy to use. The AONB Management Plan has a specifically elevated target of ensuring that 95% of the path network in the AONB is of 'easy to use' standard.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.139

- Current Rights of Way annual monitoring and reporting programme.

Theme: Recreation

Special Quality: Access Land

2.140 A significant area of the AONB is land with some public right or permission to access on foot, including; common land; village greens, National Trust land and land in public ownership.

Status of Special Quality

2.141 Rights for public access on foot apply to:

- Common Land
- Land mapped as open country under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act 2000) and
- Dedicated access land – e.g. NRW public forest estate

2.142 Exclusions and restrictions can be used on access land when management operations e.g. tree felling require public access to be restricted.

2.143 Other land has higher rights of public access and the AONB also includes areas where the landowner has agreed to permit public access; this includes significant areas owned by the National Trust.

2.144 The overall total of these types of land is 3145ha - 16.7% of the AONB.

Drivers for Change

2.145 Natural Resources Wales has completed a review of the maps of access land published under the CRoW Act 2000.

2.146 A large proportion of access land is owned or managed by the National Trust, or is in public ownership and is actively managed for recreation and nature conservation.

2.147 There is also a large proportion of access land that is common land; the accessibility and value of this land as a recreation resource is dependent on appropriate commons management – particularly controlled burning and appropriate grazing levels.

Current and Future Trends

2.148 The high extent and distribution of land available for public access is expected to be maintained. There may be localised or temporary issues where it is difficult to integrate public access and land management requirements issues, e.g. on some commons, or in public forests where tree felling is required.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.149

- Extent and accessibility of access land.

Theme: Recreation

Special Quality: Beaches

2.150 Sandy beaches are important for recreation, health and well-being and are a high profile landscape feature of the AONB that promotes the area for tourism.

Status of Special Quality

2.151 Gower's sandy beaches are one of the main attractions for visitors to the area, and therefore a significant natural resource supporting the tourism industry. There are 16 main beaches, with a number of smaller coves and inlets. Beaches across Gower consistently attain Blue Flag or Green Coast awards standards. The National Trust beach at Rhossili has a strong national and international profile with visitors.

Drivers for Change

2.152 The Destination Management Plan for Swansea Bay²² recognises the importance of Gower beaches to the area's tourism offer. There will be a continued need for coordinated beach management to sustain their high quality.

2.153 The Shoreline Management Plan provides a large-scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal erosion and flooding around the coast of South Wales. It also presents policies to help manage these risks to people and to the developed, historic and natural environment in a sustainable manner. The current plan (SMP2) identifies policy approaches for coastal management sections around the AONB.

Current and Future Trends

2.154 Bathing Water Quality on Gower beaches has been of a consistently high standard in the recent past (see Water Quality) and is expected to be maintained for the foreseeable future.

2.155 Water quality and the extent/standard of beach facilities is such that Gower beaches are regularly Blue Flag award beaches; four Gower beaches (Caswell Bay, Langland Bay, Bracelet Bay and Port Eynon) regularly receive blue flag awards.

2.156 Visitor numbers to the wider Swansea Bay area have increased (4.2 million visitors in 2011 compared to 3.9 million in 2006), with almost one in five visitors coming because of the coast/beaches. Visitor numbers, tourism revenue and the number of tourism-related jobs are all expected to increase; the emerging Swansea Bay Destination Management Plan will be seeking to manage the sustainable development of these trends. However, increasing

²² <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/dmp>

visitor numbers to Gower beaches can lead to environmental problems (such as erosion and habitat damage), beach and facility degradation.

2.157 Concerns around the loss of sand from beaches along the south coast – possibly linked to dredging in the Bristol Channel - were expressed in the 2006 plan. Studies²³ supporting the Shoreline Management Plan review suggest that beach levels are naturally variable on this stretch of coast with little evidence supporting any overall trend.

Potential Monitoring and Indicators

2.158

- Continued monitoring of bathing water quality to EU standards
- Annual application and awards of Blue Flag/Green Coast Awards
- Beach profile surveillance and monitoring through the SMP2
- Monitoring/Surveillance of beach litter (including sea borne litter)

²³ Halcrow for the Swansea and Carmarthen Bay Engineering Group (2010). Baseline Process Understanding Report.

- 3.1 This Chapter describes a broader picture of activities and pressures the AONB, and how these may change over the next 20 years. Activities and pressures reflect the social and economic aspects of the AONB. The principle of sustainable development recognises the inter-relationship and inter-dependency between these two aspects and the environment of the AONB.
- 3.2 Activities and pressures are described below under the following headings:
- Primary industries
 - Agriculture
 - Timber & forestry
 - Fishing
 - Minerals
 - Tourism
 - Transport
 - Utilities and communications
 - Climate Change
 - Development and off-shore activities
 - Housing
 - Community facilities and local services

The Council maintains socio-economic profiles for all of Swansea's wards (see <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/wardprofiles>). There is no specific total population figure available for the AONB. The total population of the two wards fully within the AONB (Gower and Pennard) is 6300, with many more people living in the other wards peripheral to the AONB. Gower ward is one of the sparsely populated wards in Swansea and - compared to the rest of Swansea – wards in the AONB tend to have an older population with lower birth rates.

Primary Industries

Agriculture

- 3.3 Agriculture is the main primary industry in the AONB. Good quality soils (a significant amount of enclosed farmland is Grade 1 or 2) and a relatively (for Wales) mild climate make Gower one of the more agriculturally versatile and productive parts of Wales.
- 3.4 Farming in recent years has typically been focussed on rearing livestock (mainly cattle and sheep), with some arable and horticultural crops. After a period of decline in numbers, it is thought that only three dairy farms remain in the AONB. Significant tracts of common land, including the North Gower salt marshes are grazed by cattle and sheep and - to a lesser extent - by ponies.
- 3.5 Farms tend to be small- or medium- sized, and many have diversified into tourism and/or producing goods for sale through farm shops. Most of the caravan sites on Gower are on farms, some of which are still working farms. There are also a small number of enterprises growing vegetables and fruit.
- 3.6 The Welsh Agricultural Survey²⁴ provides a range of statistical estimates for the different types of land usage, livestock numbers and agricultural labour. Data specifically for Gower AONB is not available, but for the areas that include the AONB, some key statistics/trends include:
- Estimates of active farm holdings remained at around 200 (e.g. 207 in 2002; 198 in 2006; 217 in 2012);
 - Estimates of total number of farmers remained at around 360, but more are now part time (161 full time/195 part time in 2002, compared to 146 full time/220 part time in 2012);
 - Estimates of holdings with crops or horticulture reduced from 94 in 2002 to 71 in 2012;
 - More specifically, estimates of holdings growing cereals reduced from 61 in 2002 to 42 in 2012
- 3.7.1 Like elsewhere, farming patterns on Gower are influenced by market prices for agricultural products and services. Agri-environment schemes have supported farmers with bio-diversity, woodland and wider environmental management on their farms. In 2010, there were 53 Tir Gofal agreements, covering 3198 ha of land. The current Glastir²⁵ scheme (funded through the Wales Rural Development Plan) initially had a comparatively low take-up on

²⁴ Statistics for Wales 2013. Agricultural Small Area Statistics for Wales, 2002-2012. Statistical Bulletin SB102/2013. <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/agricultural-small-area-statistics/?lang=en>. 'Small areas' 199 and 200 include Swansea communities of: Penrice; Port Eynon; Rhossili; Reynoldston; Llangennith, Llanmadoc and Cheriton; Llanrhidian Lower and Llanrhidian Higher; Ilston; and Three Crosses.

²⁵

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/farming/schemes/glastir/?lang=en>

Gower (394ha – Entry Level, 131ha – Advanced in 2013), but the latest agreement figures (March 2015) are:

- Glastir Entry – 1697ha
- Glastir Commons – 1781ha
- Glastir Advanced – 826ha

- 3.8 Other initiatives such as the Gower Commons Initiative (and its successor Life in Common) helped to encourage more grazing on common land – enhancing its bio-diversity and its appearance by the removal of scrub and bracken and the creation of firebreaks.
- 3.9 Agriculture can have mixed impacts on the landscape and biodiversity. For example, arable cultivation can leave field margins for wildlife, but the use of pesticides can have the negative impact. Cultivated agricultural land of south-east Gower coast is home to a highly diverse arable plant community – one of the biggest declining and most threatened groups of plants in Wales. Gower has retained a strong landscape pattern of small- to medium- sized fields bounded by hedges and stone walls; however, the use of plastic sheeting and polytunnels to cover fruit and vegetables - although not prevalent in the AONB - can have an adverse effect on the landscape.
- 3.10 One activity that has raised concerns is the lifting of pasture for turf as a type of farm diversification. This can initially leave a barren landscape and a loss of habitat for wildlife, although this can be moderated if areas are lifted and reseeded in rotation. Where this is associated with the removal of topsoil the long term impact on soil quality may become more serious. However, any changes to uncultivated or semi-cultivated land which may cause soil erosion or loss of soil structure over time now require an Environmental Impact Assessment²⁶.
- 3.11 It is difficult to predict the future for farming in Gower. Single farm payments have replaced previous production subsidies and support less intensive production. One of the requirements of the single farm payment scheme is for farmers to demonstrate cross-compliance on a range of statutory management requirements for the environment, public, plant, and animal health and welfare. Farmers are also expected to maintain cross-compliance to keep land in good agricultural and environmental condition. The single farm payment scheme is expected to continue support for farmers to conserve and enhance landscape features and bio-diversity, by retaining field margins and hedgerows for example, and to manage land well and keep soils in good condition.
- 3.12 Other, more locally-driven rural development initiatives include Rural Swansea Action - supporting the diversification of the rural economy, enhancing prosperity at a local level and developing Rural Swansea's identity

²⁶ Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Wales) Regulations 2007.
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/conservationbiodiversity/eiahome/eia-whatrtheregs/?lang=en>

for producing high quality Food, Arts, Crafts and Natural Products able to supply local markets.

- 3.13 Maintaining grazing on the extensive areas of Common Land is essential to their conservation. Some commons have suffered from under-grazing because of traditional practices have altered. Pressures from traffic travelling across the commons have combined to increase the risk of car/livestock accidents. Some 40 mph speed limits on roads across certain commons in Gower have been introduced to reduce this risk.
- 3.14 Trends toward fewer full-time farmers – with an aging demographic - as fewer young people enter farming. Opportunities for farm diversification may buffer Gower farms from some of these effects and assist in continuing the positive land management practices which protect Gower’s special qualities.
- 3.15 Affordable housing and other incentives will be needed to help young farmers. The growth of horse riding and stables, and the use of farmland for grazing horses near the larger villages on the edge of the AONB are expected to continue giving more fields a paddock-like appearance. In turn, this is likely to keep land values higher than their normal agricultural value. Sites being used in this way tend to coincide with the location of some of the best quality land in the AONB.
- 3.16 Sustaining the viability of farming on Gower is a major consideration in safeguarding the special qualities of the AONB. The previous management plan was important in informing the UDP, the Tourism Strategy, Swansea 2020 the Economic Development Strategy and the Swansea Rural Development Strategy 2007-2013. This revised management plan needs to provide a similar service to current and emerging policy – particularly the Local Development Plan and the current round of Rural Development planning and investment.

Timber, Forestry, and Woodland Management

- 3.17 The timber industry in Gower is small, with a handful of growers, one static sawmill at Cilibion, several mobile sawmills and several woodland management contractors. The Penrice Estate has some large areas of woodland, and NRW manages two productive woodland sites; Parkwood is a mixed wood plantation with some broadleaves dating back 150 years, whereas Millwood is predominantly coniferous/mixed woodland. Many of Gower’s woodlands are privately owned or owned by conservation bodies: National Trust, the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and Coed Cadw (the Woodland Trust in Wales).
- 3.18 In recent years, grant schemes have encouraged owners to actively manage woodlands through appropriate felling, thinning and replanting. Emphasis on management of NRW woodlands has been increasingly toward multiple use and community benefit, with informal recreation being encouraged.

- 3.19 Gower's woodlands form predominantly small blocks dispersed throughout the landscape between fields and commons. Gower is particularly noted for its ash and alder woodlands, which are important landscape and biodiversity features; several of these woodland blocks are of European biodiversity importance (Special Areas of Conservation).
- 3.20 Woodlands make a significant contribution to the appearance and character of the landscape. Management techniques that adopt a continuous-cover approach and rely on small-scale felling, replanting and regeneration can help to maintain healthy and attractive woodland.
- 3.21 With an emphasis and commitment toward managing woodlands for sustainable and community use, the future for Gower's woodlands looks generally stable. Further stands of Gower woodlands would benefit from appropriate active management to improve their condition and support forestry enterprises. Replacement of conifers with broadleaf species in some areas would be desirable.
- 3.22 Ash Die-Back (*Chalara fraxinea*) disease presents an uncertain future risk to ash woodland on Gower. The first cases have now been confirmed on Gower, and AONB management needs to keep in touch with the ongoing situation in Wales and the rest of the UK and respond appropriately.
- 3.23 The Welsh Government 'Woodlands for Wales'²⁷ strategy has identified four strategic themes:
- Responding to climate change;
 - Woodlands for people;
 - A competitive and integrated forest sector; and
 - Environmental quality.

Fishing

- 3.24 The Gower fishing communities are famed for, and rely on, the industries related to their high quality shellfish. Lobster and crab are landed at Oxwich Bay, with cockle fishing along the north coast in the Burry Inlet and Loughor estuary that is still carried out by hand. NRW is working closely with the cockle industry to create a sustainable fishery which can provide a regular income to licence holders. Small seafood processing plants are situated on Gower and these local employers are under pressure to diversify if they are to have a long-term future.
- 3.25 Overall, fishing employs relatively few people in the area. Limited commercial fishing around the coast of Gower is by a small fleet based near the Tawe Barrage in Swansea. There are also several lobster boats based at Oxwich. Mussel gathering takes place off Whiteford and in Swansea Bay, and commercial fishermen from outside take crabs and lobster. Angling is carried

²⁷ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/wwstrategy>

out by individuals from the shore or by kayak and from private and charter boats, many of which are based near the Tawe Barrage.

Minerals

- 3.26 Limestone was historically quarried on a small-scale on Gower, providing building materials and raw material for the manufacture of lime. One of the larger quarries was at Pwlldu Bay, which exported rock to north Devon by sea. Barlands Quarry at Kittle was the last working quarry in the AONB, and this ceased operation several years ago. Around Crofty and Penclawdd - on the north-eastern edge of the AONB - coal and other minerals were mined until the 1930's, but limited traces of the associated works are now visible apart from mineshafts which occasionally appear on Llanrhidian marsh.
- 3.27 Minerals Planning Policy Wales (2000) requires Swansea Council to make provision for mineral resources, and a Regional Technical Statement (2008) identifies the contribution which is expected. Reserves of aggregates within the Local Authority area are very limited, and limestone deposits within the AONB form a significant part of these reserves.
- 3.28 There is current commercial interest in the possibility of extracting Coalbed Methane (CBM) gas from in the Coal Measures using a process referred to as 'fracking'. CBM is a clean burn gas, and carbon dioxide emissions are lower than for coal and oil productions. A UK Onshore Petroleum Exploration and Development License (PEDL) was granted in May 2008 that covers 10,000 hectares of the South Wales Coalfield, including parts of the County. The UK government are currently consulting on a further licensing round for PEDL. Underground Coal Gasification (the conversion of solid coal into gas through underground combustion) is also being considered as an approach to accessing energy reserves from Coal Measures under the Loughor Estuary. Developments and commercial extraction using these technologies have the potential to effect the special qualities of the AONB. Potential effects may include:
- landscape/visual effects from surface infrastructure/facilities
 - impacts on groundwater from contamination by chemical additives/processes during extraction

Tourism and Recreation

- 3.29 Tourism and recreation have become increasingly important sectors of the local economy of the AONB. The wider Swansea Bay area welcomes more than four million visitors every year, most of whom would have visited the AONB. In 2011, visitors spent around £333m, supporting about 5,600 jobs. A 2012 visitor survey found that the factors which most influenced visitor's to visit the area were the coast (44%), scenery/landscape (44%), beaches (35%), The most popular activity undertaken by visitors was low level walking (2-8 miles) (45%), which has been the most popular activity undertaken by visitors every year since 2005 (and 52% of visitors in 2012).
- 3.30 Total bedstock figures for Gower are estimated at 21,500, with the majority (87%) accounted for by camping and caravan parks. A proportion of this bedstock will be properties/caravans taken up by local people for their own use and not therefore available to visitors from out of the area. There is a significant number (c.250) of self-catering properties. Bed and Breakfasts have been declining in number and there are very few hotels in the rural area.
- 3.31 A wide range of recreational activities take place on Gower, many of which are associated with the special qualities, and especially associated with the sea. Water based recreation activities include surfing, diving, fishing, boating and canoeing. Land based activities include walking, cycling, horse riding, climbing, caving, golf, archery, and less active ones such as bird watching, archaeology, and visiting historic sites. In a 2001 visitor survey²⁸, natural beauty and tranquillity were identified as the main reasons for visits. Interpretation off and on site can add to visitors' enjoyment, understanding and appreciation.
- 3.32 Tourism and recreation activities have environmental impacts on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. For example, static caravan sites, traffic congestion at peak times, and erosion of footpaths. Indeed in the 2001 visitor survey, visitor pressure was cited as the greatest threat to Gower, followed by sand erosion, and air pollution (e.g. from vehicle exhaust fumes). Other impacts include litter, especially on the beaches.
- 3.33 Recent tourism trends have been summarised²⁹ as:
- Trips by GB resident to Wales fell slightly from 2006-10 but recovered in 2011 to nearly 9.7m trips.
 - Like the rest of the UK, Wales has benefited from the staycation effect. Since the economic downturn in 2008 the number of holidays taken in Wales has grown strongly with an extra 1 million trips taken in 2011. However business and VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) trips fell sharply in this period.
 - The largest growth has been in mid length holidays (4-7 nights) which have grown by nearly 40% from 2008 to 2011. Holidays of this length

²⁸ Gower Visitor Survey 2001 prepared for the City and County of Swansea by Market Research Wales and published in December 2001

²⁹ The Tourism Company (2013). Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for Rural Swansea Including Gower AONB. Draft report for Swansea Rural Development Partnership.

are often taken in non-serviced accommodation and are particularly relevant to Gower.

- There has also been growth, albeit smaller, in short stays, which still account for the largest number of trips in Wales. They have the advantage of being significantly less seasonally peaked than longer holidays.
- Data on activities undertaken in Wales show the importance of sightseeing, relaxing, walking, visiting beaches, visiting castles and swimming, which are all activities for which Gower has a comparative advantage.
- Specific outdoor activities have been growing in popularity. The market of people undertaking these activities as part of a general holiday experience is much larger than those motivated by them specifically as the main reason to travel.
- Watching wildlife, visiting beaches and walking by the coast are areas in which Wales has a relatively strong market share compared to the rest of the UK.
- Market segments with particular opportunities for Wales include: Pre-family Explorers; Budget Families; Active Family Explorers; Older Cultural Explorer Couples and Scenic Explorer Couples. Gower is currently seeing a balance of families and couples in its visitor profile, with significant numbers of older 'single' groups.
- Natural capital is seen as Wales's particular comparative strength, embracing scenery and landscapes in addition to beaches. Gower has an international profile in this context.

3.34 Whilst the growth in the tourist industry will benefit the local economy, this must be carefully balanced against the potential negative impact on the environment and its special qualities. An approach based on the principles of sustainable tourism would address this. Sustainable tourism attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems; it is 'responsible tourism', which is both ecologically and culturally sensitive. The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for the local people, tourism companies and the tourists themselves. The principle of promoting sustainable tourism - particularly around walking and cycling - should be more actively encouraged and has been embraced by the Swansea Rural Development Plan. The Transport section (below) describes the links with the promotion of public transport for walking. Public transport has the particular advantage of reducing the impact of traffic pollution, congestion, shortage of parking spaces but more positively, makes linear (particularly) coastal walks easier. Public transport can deliver visitors staying in Swansea (where the majority of accommodation is) benefits of easy access to Gower without their cars. Cycling is more difficult to promote as there are few 'safe' roads in Gower and even fewer alternatives other than the incomplete north Gower cycle route.

3.35 Like many rural areas, Gower suffers from some nuisance and illegal activities. These tend to be confined to localised sites and encompass common problems such as fly-tipping, wild-camping, barbecue parties, and

opportunistic car parking. Off-roading in 4x4 vehicles and motor bikes has been problem on Cefn Bryn but was reduced by the installation of roadside bunding. There have also been issues with mountain bikers using the coastal path and doing damage to some iron-age earthwork sites such as The Bulwark on Llanmadoc Hill. Sea borne debris and litter on the beaches is a regular problem and organisations such as the National Trust Wales organise regular beach cleaning events.

Transport

- 3.36 The Gower road network is all single carriageway and consists of one A class road, four B roads and a number of unclassified roads. Many of the roads are narrow and bounded by hedges or stone walls that contribute to the character of the AONB. Council policy is not to widen or carrying out improvements to Gower roads, unless necessary for road safety. A Highways Works Good Practice Guide³⁰ supports management of highways assets on Gower that conserves and enhances the AONB.
- 3.37 Travel by car is the typical mode of transport for residents and visitors. Some routes to the more popular beaches become congested at peak times. Narrow road sections – particularly around Parkmill and Kilvrough – can lead to severe delays when buses interact with cars/caravans, motor homes, freight vehicles and coaches. Traffic counter figures suggest a slower increase in volumes in recent times than the national average. Several of the car parks serving the more popular coastal destinations are Council owned, but others are private enterprises. Car parks for the beaches nearest to Swansea (such as Bracelet Bay, Langland Bay and Caswell Bay) tend to get full at peak periods.
- 3.38 Public bus services reach most parts of Gower from central Swansea. The main routes in south and north Gower have frequent services, though the smaller villages in north-west and south Gower have limited schedules. The continuing reductions in public funding for buses represent a future threat to the network and a positive plan to protect, grow and further improve the service would be valuable. The Gower Sunday Explorer – funded through the RDP – has provided a dedicated service during the summer months for several years, but there is no long-term plan for the continuance of this service. Bus stop infrastructure on Gower is often sub-standard, visually intrusive and impacts on the visitor environment.
- 3.39 The network serves local people's needs as well as visitors. It has been successfully promoted for walkers through a series of 'Walking by Bus' leaflets produced by CCS and the National Trust as well as through pocket time tables and leaflets and the BayTrans public transport partnership website.
- 3.40 The car is likely to continue to be the main means of transport in Gower. Traffic growth will to some extent be limited by the capacity of the road network, and the fact that Gower being a peninsula does not have any through routes. At the same time limited car park capacity at the popular destinations, rising fuel costs and wider policy objectives aimed at reducing carbon emissions are all likely to be influencing factors. In the 1990s the Gower Sustainable Transport Project (formerly the Gower Transport Initiative) examined ways of encouraging the use of alternative means of transport to the car for recreational trips. It proposed several pilot schemes including a circular bus service geared to walkers and cyclists, traffic calming on routes

³⁰ CCS 2011 Good Practice Guide for Highways Works within the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

across common land, and the promotion of a lightly trafficked route on road for cyclists on North Gower. The bus service is now part of the Gower Explorer bus network and the cycle route has been completed (see paragraph 3.46 below). It would be a valuable exercise to review sustainable transport issues and provision during the next plan period.

- 3.41 A range of issues around car parking in the AONB have been raised by stakeholders and visitors, including visual appearance and upkeep, pricing, location and capacity at peak times.
- 3.42 In 2007 a new partnership was established to promote public transport in Swansea's rural areas including Gower. This followed the establishment of the Gower Explorer bus network in 2004 and a subsequent consultant's report which recommended that partnership be established to promote public transport. The Swansea Bay Travel and Tourism Partnership (branded as BayTrans) includes local authorities, public transport operators, NRW, the Gower Society and the Ramblers. Through a combination of leaflets and a website, BayTrans is encouraging greater use of public transport for recreation activities such as walking. For example, there has been a significant increase in people using the Gower Explorer buses for this purpose, with patronage up more than 35% in the first three years.
- 3.43 Gower roads are generally not well suited to cycling, as they are hilly and narrow in many places. Although mountain biking is generally a popular activity, much of the AONB is not used as the off road routes are not continuous. An on-road route following lightly trafficked roads in North Gower has been established. It is linked to the Celtic Trail (Route 4 of the national cycle network) at Dunvant and Gowerton, with plans to eventually follow an off-road route between Llanmorlais and Gowerton, part of which has already been constructed.
- 3.44 There is an extensive public rights of way network of more than 400km, which consists mainly of footpaths and bridleways. Traditionally these were used for travel between villages on foot or horseback. Now they are mainly used for recreational purposes, for walking, cycling, and horse riding. A number of the routes are bounded, or are sunken lanes, with their own character. This network is an important resource, providing potential traffic-free routes between settlements.
- 3.45 The Wales Coast Path opened in 2012, and the Gower section is one of its highlights. The route between Mumbles and Crofty is 38 miles long. Implementation of the development programme around Gower included improvements to the rights of way network connecting to the Wales Coast Path. Better linkage between Gower's rights of way network, the Wales Coast Path, bus routes and bus stops would be helpful to reinforce the development of sustainable tourism based on walking.
- 3.46 There are no railway routes in the AONB. The nearest railway stations are Gowerton, northeast of the AONB, and the main station at Swansea. There are good links to bus services.

3.47 Swansea airport on Fairwood Common lies on the eastern side of the AONB. There have been no scheduled flights since 2004 and the airport is now used by private aircraft and the Wales Air Ambulance.

Utilities and Communications

- 3.48 Utility company assets and equipment (e.g. sewage treatment works, pumping stations, electricity substations and transmission lines) are generally small and not visually intrusive. Companies have a duty³¹ to consider the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB when carrying out their functions. In 2010, Western Power Distribution (WPD, the local electricity distribution company) entered into the Ofgem scheme for undergrounding of selected power lines with a voltage of 10,000 and under. This is part of WPD's corporate planning. A panel consisting of representatives of the protected landscapes in South Wales (Gower and Wye Valley AONBs and the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks) has been set up to assess bids for funding for appropriate schemes. Sections of power line at Rhossili and Cefn Bryn have been undergrounded, and a number of other schemes are under consideration.
- 3.49 There is a limited public sewer and wastewater treatment capacity on Gower; this could limit development in some areas and development that does occur could be associated with an increased risk of pollution where sewage disposal arrangements are unsatisfactory.
- 3.50 The growth in mobile phones and the provision of digital radio communications (TETRA) for the police resulted in the construction of a number of masts in the AONB. There is a joint accord between the protected landscapes in England and Wales and the Mobile Phone Operators Association³². The accord recognises the operators' obligations to protect the special qualities of AONBs and National Parks, and at the same time, the Association recognises the obligations on the operators to provide a consistent a service as possible in all parts of the countryside including protected areas.
- 3.51 The number of mobile 'not- spots' on Gower is a cause of concern e.g. to public transport users in the event of delays or cancellations to bus services - when it becomes difficult to phone for information or help. The Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP)³³ will provide mobile coverage in current reception not-spots; it is a UK wide infrastructure project led by the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), for the provision of mobile mast infrastructure. All four of the public Mobile Network Operators (EE, Vodafone, O2 and Three) are supporting the project and each Operator is expected to install their equipment on each MIP mast. MIP has a finite period of the end of March 2016, by which time sites must be acquired and all mast infrastructure deployed. Swansea (including Gower) is identified in Phase 4 of the project. In view of the national significance of this project and the tight timescales, local authorities are being encouraged to make decisions on

³¹ S.85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

³² <http://www.mobilemastinfo.com/joint-accord/>

³³ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/dear-cpo-letters/mobine-infrastructure-project-letter/?lang=en>

applications (irrespective of the decision) relating to the MIP infrastructure as quickly as possible.

- 3.51 The provision of broadband in rural areas, such as the AONB, is becoming increasingly important for supporting local businesses as well providing internet access for other users. All BT telephone exchanges in the AONB have been enabled to provide broadband. However, connection speed in some parts of the AONB is currently too slow for business use. Some community broadband schemes e.g. the Gower Broadband Project³⁴ have been successful in making infrastructure investment viable and bringing super-fast broadband to many parts of the AONB.
- 3.52 The Welsh Government has now announced the rollout of the 'Superfast Cymru' scheme³⁵, where BT will provide improved infrastructure and service to areas not considered economically viable.

³⁴ <http://www.gowerbroadband.com/>

³⁵ <http://www.superfast-cymru.com/home>

Climate Change

3.53 Climate change is the now widely accepted principle-that the world's climate is being affected by increasing emissions of greenhouse gases from human activity. Even if ongoing efforts to mitigate these emissions are successful, the earth is already committed to significant climatic change.

3.54 The Climate Change Strategy for Wales³⁶ sets out:

- the current scientific evidence about climate change,
- the impacts expected in Wales
- the need for urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
- and the need to prepare for the impacts of climate change

3.55 In January 2012, the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) was published, including the CCRA for Wales³⁷. This presented an assessment of both the potential challenges and opportunities from climate change, based on the climatic changes projected by the UK Climate Projections (UKCP09). These include:

Challenges:	Opportunities*:
Increases in hot weather-related deaths and illnesses	<p>Increases in grass yields, allowing a potential increase in livestock production.</p> <p>Increase in tourist numbers and a longer tourist season</p> <p>Reductions in cold-weather related illnesses and death</p> <p>* - opportunities are likely to be transient as we move towards even higher temperatures at the end of the century</p>
Changes in soil conditions, biodiversity and landscape due to warmer, drier summers	
Reductions in river flows and water availability during the summer affecting water supplies and the natural environment	
Increases in flooding on the coast and inland, affecting people, property and infrastructure	
Changes in coastal evolution including erosion and coastal squeeze, affecting beaches, intertidal areas and other coastal features	
Changes in species including a decline in native species, changes in migration patterns and increases in alien and invasive species	
Increases in the risk of pests and diseases affecting agriculture and forestry. The risk to livestock is a particular concern	

³⁶ Climate Change Strategy for Wales – Welsh Assembly Government October 2010. <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/climatechange/publications/strategy/?lang=en>

³⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/adapting-to-climate-change>

- 3.56 The Climate Change Strategy for Wales describes ways in which businesses, organisations, communities and individuals can play their part in reducing their carbon footprint. The LDP will contain an assessment of the potential for renewable energy resources and technologies, and energy efficiency/conservation measures. The LDP will need to ensure that these developments do not impact on the special qualities of the AONB.
- 3.57 A first step toward understanding how the AONB is most at risk from the changing climate will be to complete a vulnerability assessment for the special qualities of the AONB. Informed by the CCRA for Wales, the assessment will identify those features most at risk and allow us to plan for those changes – or mitigate them where possible
- 3.58 Future challenges specifically around coastal flooding and erosion have been addressed through the review of the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP2). The long term approaches for the three coastal sections in the AONB are as follows:

Coastal Section	Summary of Management Approach
Mumbles Head to Worm's Head	Allow natural erosion of the undeveloped coastline; hold the existing line through maintenance of existing defences within the bays; and the management of existing sand dune systems
Worm's Head to Whiteford Point	Allow this predominantly undeveloped coastline to continue to develop naturally. There are few socio-economic assets at risk from coastal erosion or flooding along this frontage and the recommended approach is for relocation of assets rather than defence construction.
Loughor Estuary	Allow natural development of the undefended shore; and hold the existing line through maintenance (and upgrading, if justified) of existing defences to reduce the risk of coastal erosion and flooding to key assets.

Offshore Activities

- 3.59 Offshore activities can have an impact on the landscape and seascape of an AONB. Responsibilities for marine planning arising from the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 lie with Welsh Government. Welsh Government intends to have a Marine Plan for Wales in place by 2015. The Marine Plan will set out policies for sustainable development in the Welsh marine environment.
- 3.60 The two main activities with a potential impact on Gower are marine dredging for sand and offshore wind turbine developments.
- 3.61 Dredging marine sand for use in the construction industry has long been practised at various sites in the Bristol Channel, including Helwick Bank, which lies to the south of Port Eynon. Between 1964 and 1999, a total of 1,265,241 tonnes were extracted. Licensing through the Welsh Government on behalf of the Crown Estate regulates sand extraction. The British Marine Aggregate Producers Association³⁸ produce annual reports on licenced areas and dredged areas/volumes.
- 3.62 Appendix C (Baseline Process Understanding) of the SMP2 outlines the evidence and conclusions around the links between marine dredging activity and variations in beach sediment levels around Gower. There appears to be little conclusive evidence of the effects of dredging on the beaches.
- 3.63 The proposals for the Atlantic Array wind farm have been withdrawn by the developer, however other renewable energy developments in the Bristol Channel have the potential to effect the seascape and key views from the AONB.

³⁸ <http://www.bmapa.org/downloads/reference.php>

Development

- 3.64 Most changes in land use are regulated through the development planning system. Planning policy in the adopted Unitary Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) provide the framework for development control decisions. The emphasis of existing policies is that development in the AONB should be not prejudice the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and historic built environment of the AONB. Policies allow for small-scale housing developments of a scale and design in keeping with the existing setting. The purpose of the policies is to ensure that development within the AONB is of a type, scale, and quality which complements the special qualities and enhances the landscape.
- 3.65 The Gower AONB Design Guide was published and adopted as SPG in 2011. This detailed guidance is intended to help property owners, developers and planners to ensure that development respects the distinctive character of both the natural and built environment of Gower. The Guide provides a practical design tool to be used by all involved in the design and development process, whether planning permission is required or not. Other relevant SPG includes Planning for Community Safety³⁹.
- 3.64 There is less planning control over agricultural buildings, which can - because of their size and materials - have a significant impact on the landscape. The principles and advice in the Design Guide should still have useful application on these developments.
- 3.66 Future changes in agriculture may affect the demand for new buildings and the conversion of others to non-agricultural uses. Barn conversions to houses and adaptation of buildings for holiday accommodation are typical examples. The Welsh Government's Technical Advice 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (TAN 6) also addresses these issues⁴⁰.

³⁹ City and County of Swansea (2012) Planning for Community Safety.

<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/spg>

⁴⁰ Welsh Government Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 6 July 2010

Housing

- 3.68 Settlement patterns and the design of individual buildings and the space between them contribute to the appearance of the landscape and its evolution over time. Dwellings form a significant part of this scene, and are essential for those working in the countryside. The Gower AONB Design Guide provides guidance on sympathetic development, maintenance and refurbishment of buildings within the AONB.
- 3.70 The UDP identifies 16 'small villages' in the AONB, where small-scale residential development (and non-residential) would be supported subject to certain criteria. One 'large village' has been identified in the AONB – Pennard/Southgate where housing may be permitted in exceptional circumstances where this would contribute local needs affordable housing.
- 3.71 In common with many other rural areas, affordable housing on Gower is an issue for local people. The price of housing coupled with the current difficulty of raising a deposit for mortgage has meant many local people who are first time buyers are unable to buy a house. The availability of affordable housing for rent or to buy is important in helping to maintain communities with a balanced age group, and one that is not dominated by wealthy or retired people. Permission may be granted for the specific purpose of providing affordable housing to meet an existing deficiency for people who need to live locally where this cannot be met through the general housing market.
- 3.72 In several communities, holiday/second homes form a large proportion of the properties, which can be empty for large parts of the year - having an impact upon communities and community facilities. However, the impact can be mixed, as the tourism income generated can be significant, and can support a variety of enterprises that are focused upon the tourism market.
- 3.73 As part of the evidence base for the LDP Preferred Strategy, an Affordable Housing Viability Study⁴¹ looks at the potential implications that affordable housing provision would have on the viability of housing developments. The study identifies appropriate thresholds and targets affordable housing provision within different areas of the City and County of Swansea – including Gower.

⁴¹ Andrew Golland Associates 2013. City and County of Swansea Affordable Housing Viability Assessment <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=55469>

Community Facilities and Local Services

- 3.73 Most of the large villages in the AONB have some community facilities such as a church, village hall or a pub. Community facilities and services are important for the well-being of residents living in the AONB. Several village halls within the AONB have been refurbished in recent years with additional facilities to cater for increased use and provide better facilities for disabled people. Funding has been provided from sources such as the AONB Sustainable Development Fund and Rural Development Plan.
- 3.74 The provision of doctors and dentists is sparse in the AONB with Scurlage medical centre the focus for west Gower, and Pennard surgery for east Gower. There are other medical facilities in villages just outside the AONB (e.g. Bishopston and Penclawdd). Sub post offices are more limited in extent and at least one has closed since the publication of the original plan in 2006.
- 3.75 Most villages have at least one shop, but this is a situation that is threatened by increasing numbers of people shopping at larger shops and supermarkets outside the AONB, and with the advent of home delivery services from these to villages in the AONB. The community shop in Llanmadoc has recently moved to a new purpose-built development, and there are several local produce markets operating within and around the AONB reflecting the increasing interest in local food and arts and crafts. The Rural Swansea Action project has been supporting and developing local suppliers to make the most of their products and support the rural economy.
- 3.76 There are three primary schools in the AONB at Knelston, Llanrhidian and Pennard. These are feeder schools for the nearest comprehensive schools at Gowerton or Bishopston. The latter does not have a sixth form so post-16 pupils have to travel to Swansea or Gorseinon. Further education is also provided at Gower College in Gorseinon and Swansea. School premises provide an important venue for community activities, such as non-vocational further education classes and community meetings.
- 3.77 The Welsh Government has recently published a Technical Advice Note (TAN)⁴² to provide guidance on how the planning system can support rural communities and contribute to:
- Sustainable rural economies;
 - Sustainable rural housing;
 - Sustainable rural services; and
 - Sustainable agriculture.
- 3.78 In the introduction the TAN states ‘the planning system has a key role to play in supporting the delivery of sustainable rural communities. It can help to ensure that appropriate development takes place in the right place at the right time by making sufficient land available to provide homes and employment opportunities for local people, helping to sustain rural services. 3.79

⁴² Technical Advice Note 6: Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities Welsh Government July 2010

Simultaneously, the planning system must respond to the challenges posed by climate change, for example by accommodating the need for renewable energy generation. It must also protect and enhance the natural and historic environment and safeguard the countryside and open spaces. The overall goal for the planning system is to support living and working rural communities in order that they are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Planning authorities should seek to strengthen rural communities by helping to ensure that existing residents can work and access services locally using low carbon travel and obtain a higher proportion of their energy needs from local renewable sources’.

CHAPTER 4 THE VISION

- 4.1 The development of the 2006 Management Plan invested considerable time in preparing and agreeing a 20-year vision for the AONB. The overall vision for the AONB has been carried forward into the 2016 Management Plan and is:

Gower is recognised by residents and visitors as a protected landscape of international importance where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and cultural value, and with high biological diversity. Its natural beauty will be sustained by the conservation and enhancement of its natural special qualities, whilst at the same time supporting a sustainable local economy and maintaining culturally rich communities and is reflected in the quality and scale of the built environment

- 4.2 This overall vision is expanded in a strategy around 14 key themes, each with its own 20-year vision (See Table below). These have also been carried forward from the 2006 Management Plan.

Theme Vision Statements:

Theme	20-year vision for Theme
1:Biodiversity	A landscape rich in wildlife and of international importance, with the key habitats of limestone grasslands, lowland heathland, salt marshes, sand dunes, freshwater marsh and alder and ash woodlands in a good and stable condition
2:Geology	A geological landscape of international importance which is understood and respected, which continues to provide opportunities for environmental education, and is protected from damaging activities.
3:Landscape and Seascape	A landscape, which is internationally renowned for its small scale and variety of character and which is closely related to the surrounding sea and, supports sustainable development. A landscape where the built environment is complementary to this character and where the pattern of small fields, tracts of common land, and sunken lanes remain as examples of man's impact in evolving the landscape character.
4:Cultural Heritage	A landscape in which the rich cultural heritage, with its ancient monuments, historic landscapes, parklands, gardens, and historic buildings, is managed to a high standard in recognition of its national importance, and is interpreted to a high standard.
5:Natural Resources	An environment where the air and water quality is good, and supports quiet recreation and a variety of terrestrial and marine wildlife. Soil quality is maintained to support more environmentally friendly agriculture.
6:Tranquillity	A landscape where tranquillity can still be enjoyed free from noise and visual intrusion. A landscape where the beauty of the starlight night sky can still be appreciated.
7:Recreation Resources	A network of public rights of way which is fully open, usable and well-maintained, and has been improved to provide access for all as far as possible. Access land which is clearly identified, and is available for use, unless subject to temporary restrictions. Beaches, which are well managed for public use and meet current standards of management and criteria, including those set by award schemes.
8:Primary Industries	An economically thriving sector where agriculture is more diverse, meets modern day and perceived future requirements and is supported by agri-environment schemes and diversification compatible with the objectives of conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB.

Theme	20-year vision for Theme
9:Tourism	A vibrant tourism economy based on the principles of sustainable tourism offering a quality experience, in which the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB, and their quiet enjoyment have top priority. A dynamic tourist industry, which creates economic benefits, and helps support community facilities and infrastructure.
10:Transport	A network and management system, which supports a variety of modes of transport to suit community and visitor needs in a sustainable way, with a minimal impact on the special qualities of the AONB.
11:Utilities and Communications	A landscape in which the needs of the utility and communication companies, including the supporting infrastructure, can be accommodated without a detrimental impact on the landscape and seascape
12: Development and Offshore Activities	A landscape in which the needs of new development including the supporting infrastructure can be accommodated without a detrimental impact on the landscape and seascape, and where the principles of sustainable development are adopted
13:Housing, Community Facilities and Services	Thriving diverse communities, which contain a range of housing and facilities to meet the needs of residents and visitors.
14:Awareness Raising and Understanding	A landscape which is fully recognised for its special qualities and, and is appreciated and understood by residents and visitors

Chapter 5 The Strategy

- 5.1 The overall aim of the strategy is to work toward the 20-year vision for the AONB. The Strategy identifies a series of policies and objectives for each of the 14 key themes. These five-year policies and objectives set the framework for the Action Plan in Chapter 7, to be implemented in the period 2014-2018.
- 5.2 As with the previous plan, CCS actions – and those of other partners - are often dependent on availability of funding from existing budgets and/or securing funding from other sources.

Theme 1: Biodiversity – Vision - A landscape rich in wildlife and of international importance, with the key habitats of limestone grasslands, lowland heathland, salt marshes, sand dunes, freshwater marsh and alder and ash woodlands in a good and stable condition

Policies

- 5.3 W1 Conserve and enhance all existing areas of key habitats and populations of key species.
- 5.4 W2 Conserve and enhance all existing statutory designated biological sites.
- 5.5 W3 Gain a better understanding of the condition of key habitats and wildlife at sites statutorily designated for biological reasons and other important sites.

Objectives

- 5.6 Objective 1: Ensure that the Local Development Plan policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the biodiversity features of the AONB.
- 5.7 Objective 2: Identify and address management issues and priorities for biodiversity features of the AONB to achieve Favourable Conservation Status and improve ecological connectivity.

Theme 2: Geology – Vision - A geological landscape of international importance which is understood and respected, which continues to provide opportunities for environmental education, and is protected from damaging activities

Policies

- 5.8 G1 Conserve and enhance the geological landscape and all important geological features in the AONB.

Objectives

- 5.9 Objective 3: Ensure that Local Development Plan policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the geological features of the AONB.
- 5.10 Objective 4: Identify and address management issues and priorities for geological features across the AONB, ensuring that these features are visible and available for study.

Theme 3: Landscape and Seascape – Vision - A landscape, which is internationally renowned for its small scale and variety of character and which is closely related to the surrounding sea and, supports sustainable development. A landscape where the built environment is complementary to this character and where the pattern of small fields, tracts of common land, and sunken lanes remain as examples of man’s impact in evolving the landscape character

Policies

- 5.11 LS1 Encourage the conservation and enhancement of the AONB’s key distinctive landscape features - limestone cliffs, saltmarshes, sand dunes, common land, wooded valleys and small fields bounded by hedges and stone walls.
- 5.12 LS2 Protect and enhance traditional views of the landscape, seascape, and landmark features.

Objectives

- 5.13 Objective 5: Ensure that spatial planning policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the landscape, seascape and key views in and out of the AONB.
- 5.14 Objective 6: Review and address landscape management issues and priorities for key landscape features and views across the AONB.
- 5.15 Objective 7: Extend the recording and monitoring of the AONB landscape, seascape and key views.

Theme 4: Cultural Heritage – Vision - A landscape in which the rich cultural heritage, with its ancient monuments, historic landscapes, parklands, gardens, and historic buildings, is managed to a high standard in recognition of its national importance, and is interpreted to a high standard

Policies

5.16 CH1 Conserve and enhance the archaeological features and built heritage of the AONB.

Objectives

5.17 Objective 8: Ensure that Local Development Plan policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the archaeological and built heritage features of the AONB.

5.18 Objective 9: Review and address the key management issues and priorities for the archaeological and built heritage of the AONB.

Theme 5: Natural Resources – Vision - An environment where the air and water quality is good, and supports quiet recreation and a variety of terrestrial and marine wildlife. Soil quality is maintained to support more environmentally friendly agriculture

Policies

- 5.19 NR1 Maintain good air and water quality for the benefit of people and ecosystems.
- 5.20 NR2 Conserve and enhance soil quality across the AONB.

Objectives

- 5.21 Objective 10: Continue to screen and monitor air and water quality across the AONB.
- 5.22 Objective 11: Progress toward Good Ecological Status for waterbodies in the AONB.
- 5.23 Objective 12: Develop a better understanding of soil conservation issues in the AONB.
- 5.24 Objective 13: Develop an understanding of the ecosystem services provided by the AONB.

Theme 6: Tranquillity - Vision - A landscape where tranquillity can still be enjoyed free from noise and visual intrusion. A landscape where the beauty of the starlight night sky can still be appreciated

Policies

- 5.25 T1 Conserve and enhance tranquillity.
- 5.26 T2 Promote measures to limit the increase of noise levels from road traffic, aircraft, and watercraft.
- 5.27 T3 Promote measures to reduce sky glow.

Objectives

- 5.28 Objective 14: Assess current levels of tranquillity, noise and light pollution.
- 5.29 Objective 15: Ensure that Local Development Plan policy and Development Control decisions protect tranquillity and the night sky of the AONB.

Theme 7: Recreation Resources – Vision - A network of public rights of way which is fully open, usable and well-maintained, and has been improved to provide access for all as far as possible. Access land which is clearly identified, and is available for use, unless subject to temporary restrictions. Beaches, which are well managed for public use and meet current standards of management and criteria, including those set by award schemes

Policies

- 5.30 RR1 Increase the number of public rights of way which are easy to use.
- 5.31 RR2 Ensure that access land is available and publicised for use by communities and visitors.
- 5.32 RR3 Keep the Gower beaches at their high standard.

Objectives

- 5.33 Objective 16: To improve the current standard and level of maintenance of public rights of way so that 95% are open, usable and clearly signposted.
- 5.34 Objective 17: To improve access opportunities around the Wales Coast Path and the Gower Way.
- 5.35 Objective 18: Ensure that Access Land is available and publicised for use by communities and visitors.
- 5.36 Objective 19: Develop a clear understanding of the recreation activities in the AONB and around the coast.
- 5.37 Objective 20: Maintain high quality status and profile of Gower beaches and associated facilities.

Theme 8: Primary Industries – Vision - An economically thriving sector where agriculture is more diverse, meets modern day and perceived future requirements and is supported by agri-environment schemes and diversification compatible with the objectives of conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB

Policies

- 5.38 PI1 Promote agriculture and woodland management in a sustainable manner linked to local, regional and national markets.
- 5.39 PI2 Support environmentally sustainable craft and workshop activities.
- 5.40 PI3 Support coordinated action for achieving a balanced and sustainable growth of the local fishing industry.

Objectives

- 5.41 Objective 21: Increase the area of the AONB under sustainable land management, including common land.
- 5.42 Objective 22: Support appropriate and sustainable farm and rural diversification and enterprise through the LDP and RDP.
- 5.43 Objective 23: Develop coordinated support for the balanced and sustainable growth of the local fishing industry.

Theme 9: Tourism – Vision - A vibrant tourism economy based on the principles of sustainable tourism offering a quality experience, in which the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB, and their quiet enjoyment have top priority. A dynamic tourist industry, which creates economic benefits, and helps support community facilities and infrastructure

Policies

- 5.44 TR1 Encourage a sustainable tourism industry and appropriate recreation facilities, that supports the local economy and the local community.
- 5.45 TR2 Promote tourism with the aim of improving the visitor experience, and in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism.

Objectives

- 5.46 Objective 24: Support the development of a sustainable tourism industry on Gower.

Theme 10: Transport - Vision - A network and management system, which supports a variety of modes of transport to suit community and visitor needs in a sustainable way, with a minimal impact on the special qualities of the AONB

Policies

- 5.47 TP1 Publicise public transport networks and the services available.
- 5.48 TP2 Promote schemes which offer a sustainable means of alternative transport including bus, cycling, and walking, and the better integration of different modes.
- 5.49 TP3 Ensure that the transport network improvements are carried out in a way to minimise their impact on the special qualities of the AONB.

Objectives

- 5.50 Objective 25: Ensure that the public have the information they need to use sustainable and active travel networks and services.
- 5.51 Objective 26: Improve the provision of sustainable and active travel networks and services across the AONB.
- 5.52 Objective 27: Develop a better understanding of car parking provision, issues and improvement priorities across the AONB.
- 5.53 Objective 28: Maintain good practice highway improvements across the AONB.

Theme 11: Utilities and Communications – Vision - A landscape in which the needs of the utility and communication companies, including the supporting infrastructure, can be accommodated without a detrimental impact on the landscape and seascape

Policies

5.54 UC1 Support the improvement of utility and communications assets that minimise the impacts on the special qualities of the AONB.

Objectives

5.55 Objective 29: Improve mobile and broadband coverage in the AONB without adversely affecting the special qualities.

5.56 Objective 30: Reduce the landscape and visual effects of the power supply network on Gower.

5.57 Objective 31: Have a clear understanding of utility/communications investment and infrastructure priorities that may affect the AONB.

Theme 12: Development and Offshore Activities - Vision - A landscape in which the needs of new development, including the supporting infrastructure, can be accommodated without a detrimental impact on the landscape and seascape, and where the principles of sustainable development are adopted

Policies

- 5.58 D1 Support new development which is locally distinct, sensitive to the location and setting, has a minimum impact on the special qualities of the AONB landscape and seascape, and incorporates designs based on the principles of sustainable development.
- 5.59 D2 Discourage development outside of the AONB which will have a detrimental effect on the special qualities of the AONB.

Objectives

- 5.60 Objective 32: Ensure that Local Development Plan policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the landscape/seascape features and views of the AONB.
- 5.61 Objective 33: Improve the quality of the built environment in the AONB.
- 5.62 Objective 34: Ensure developments outside the AONB consider potential adverse effects on the special qualities.

Theme 13: Housing, Community Facilities and Services – Vision - Thriving diverse communities, which contain a range of housing and facilities to meet the needs of residents and visitors

Policies

- 5.63 HC1 Promote the provision of affordable housing for local people.
- 5.64 HC2 Monitor change in the provision of community facilities and services.
- 5.65 HC3 Support existing community initiatives, facilities and services, including shops, post offices and primary schools.

Objectives

- 5.66 Objective 35: Ensure that LDP policy addresses the affordable housing needs of local communities.
- 5.67 Objective 36: Identify and respond to trends in the range and extent of community facilities in the AONB.

Theme 14: Awareness Raising and Understanding – Vision - A landscape which is fully recognised for its special qualities and is appreciated and understood by residents and visitors

Policies

- 5.68 AR1 Maintain a high profile for the AONB as a protected area of UK importance, which is widely recognised, and its special qualities appreciated.
- 5.69 AR2 Raise public awareness of and involvement with all the special qualities of the AONB, but particularly:
- Biodiversity
 - Geology
 - Landscape
 - Cultural Heritage.
- 5.70 AR3 Support effective governance arrangements for the management of the AONB.

Objectives

- 5.71 Objective 37: Raise awareness of all the AONB special qualities and their value.
- 5.72 Objective 38: Increase public access to, appreciation of and involvement with all the special qualities of the AONB, but particularly:
- Biodiversity
 - Geology
 - Landscape
 - Cultural Heritage
- 5.73 Objective 39: Maintain public debate and involvement in AONB issues and management.

CHAPTER 6 THE ACTION PLAN

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 1: Biodiversity		
Objective 1: Ensure that the Local Development Plan policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the biodiversity features of the AONB	Refresh the LDP biodiversity evidence base; review and adopt LDP policy protecting the biodiversity features and designations of the AONB	Nature Conservation Team, LDP Team, Planning Control
	Complete the re-evaluation of SINCs within the AONB	Nature Conservation Team
	Complete review of Local Biodiversity Action Plans for key habitats and species of the AONB	Nature Conservation Team
Objective 2: Identify and address management issues and priorities for biodiversity features of the AONB, to achieve Favourable Conservation Status (for sites, habitats and species) and improve ecological connectivity	Report on condition of SSSI biological features and identify management issues and priorities across the AONB	Natural Resources Wales, Nature Conservation Team and AONB Team, National Trust
	Report on condition of SINCs and LNRs in the AONB and identify management issues and priorities across the AONB	Nature Conservation Team, AONB Team
	Complete a climate change vulnerability assessment for key habitats and species of the AONB	AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team, National Trust
	Undertake an Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) risk assessment for the AONB -to identify risks and prioritise control actions on INNS that threaten the special qualities of the AONB	AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team, National Trust

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 1: Biodiversity (continued)		
Objective 2 (continued)	Implementation of the Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries European Marine Site (CBEEMS) Management Scheme	Nature Conservation Team, CBEEMS relevant authorities
	Undertake practical biodiversity management, working with landowners, managers, groups, volunteers and others	Nature Conservation Team, AONB Team, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Wildlife Trust for SW Wales, Gower Landscape Partnership

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 2: Geology		
Objective 3: Ensure that Local Development Plan policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the geological features of the AONB	Develop and review RIGS evidence base - including selection criteria, candidate sites - and identify RIGS across the AONB	Nature Conservation Team, AONB Team, LDP Team
	Review and adoption of LDP policy to conserve and enhance geological features of the AONB	Nature Conservation Team, AONB Team, LDP team, Planning Control
Objective 4: Identify and address management issues and priorities for geological features across the AONB, ensuring that features are visible and available for study	Report on condition of SSSI geological features and identify management issues and priorities across the AONB	Natural Resources Wales, AONB Team, National Trust
	Complete a climate change vulnerability assessment for key geological features	NRW, AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team
	Undertake practical management of geological features with landowners, managers, groups, volunteers and others	Nature Conservation Team, AONB Team, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Wildlife Trust for SW Wales, Gower Landscape Partnership

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 3: Landscape and Seascape		
Objective 5: Ensure that spatial planning policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the landscape, seascape and key views in and out of the AONB	Provide a robust evidence base that supports emerging LDP policies protecting the landscape and seascape of the AONB	AONB Team, LDP Team, Planning Control
	Review and update of LANDMAP data for the AONB	LDP Team, Natural Resources Wales, AONB Team
	Review and adoption of LDP policy to conserve and enhance the landscape and seascape of the AONB	AONB Team, LDP Team
	Engage in the development of Marine Plan for Wales	LDP Team, AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team
	Undertake a detailed assessment of the AONB seascape	Natural Resources Wales, AONB Team
Objective 6: Review and address landscape management issues and priorities for key landscape features and views across the AONB	Review, prioritise and implement management guidelines proposed for each Landscape Character Area through a Landscape Action Plan.	AONB Team
	Complete a climate change vulnerability assessment for key landscape/seascape features and views	AONB Team, National Trust
	Undertake practical management of landscape features and key views with landowners, managers, groups, volunteers and others	Nature Conservation Team, AONB Team, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Wildlife Trust for SW Wales, Gower Landscape Partnership
Objective 7: Extend the recording and monitoring of the AONB landscape, seascape and key views	Develop and implement a landscape character and photographic monitoring programme to record and assess landscape change	AONB Team, Natural Resources Wales

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 4: Cultural Heritage		
Objective 8: Ensure that Local Development Plan policies and Development Control decisions conserve and enhance the archaeological and built heritage features of the AONB	Provide a robust evidence base that supports emerging LDP policies protecting the cultural heritage of the AONB	AONB Team, LDP Team, Design and Conservation Team, Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT)
	Review and adoption of LDP policy to conserve and enhance the cultural heritage features of the AONB	AONB Team, LDP Team, Design and Conservation Team, Planning Control
Objective 9: Review and address the key management issues and priorities for the archaeological and built heritage of the AONB	Review, prioritise and implement management guidelines proposed for Cultural Heritage - Listed Buildings at Risk Register, Conservation Areas appraisals and plans, Historic landscape appraisals, Scheduled Ancient Monument management plans, historic landscapes, parks and gardens	AONB Team, Design and Conservation Team, National Trust, GGAT, Cadw, Gower Landscape Partnership
	Complete a climate change vulnerability assessment for archaeology and built heritage	AONB Team, LDP Team, Design and Conservation Team, Historic Environment Group, GGAT
	Undertake practical management of archaeological and built heritage with landowners, managers, groups, volunteers and others	AONB Team, National Trust, GGAT, Cadw, Gower Landscape Partnership

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 5: Natural Resources		
Objective 10: Continue to screen and monitor air and water quality across the AONB	Complete LAQM annual screening/monitoring requirements	Environmental Protection Team, Natural Resources Wales
	Complete Bathing Water Directive monitoring requirements	
	Complete Water Framework Directive monitoring and assessment requirements	
Objective 11: Progress toward Good Ecological Status for waterbodies in the AONB	Implement measures identified in the Western Wales River Basin Management Plan relevant to the AONB	Natural Resources Wales, AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team, Swansea Environment Forum
Objective 12: Develop a better understanding of soil conservation issues in the AONB	Review of soil and land quality data across the AONB; identification of priority issues for AONB management	AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team, Natural Resources Wales
Objective 13: Develop an understanding of the ecosystem services provided by the AONB	Undertake an ecosystems services mapping exercise in the AONB	AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team, Natural Resources Wales, Swansea Environment Forum

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 6: Tranquillity		
Objective 14: Assess current levels of tranquillity, noise and light pollution	Develop and undertake baseline/monitoring approaches for tranquillity/dark sky	AONB Team, Natural Resources Wales
Objective 15: Ensure that Local Development Plan policy and development control decisions protect tranquillity and the night sky of the AONB	Review/monitor implementation of lighting/design guide SPG in project design and Development Control	AONB Team, LDP Team, Planning Control
	Provide a robust evidence base to inform emerging LDP policies protecting the tranquillity and night skies of the AONB	
	Review and adoption of LDP policy to conserve and enhance tranquillity and night sky of the AONB	

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 7: Recreation Resources		
Objective 16: To improve the current standard and level of maintenance of public rights of way so that 95% are open, usable and clearly signposted.	Continued implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Countryside Access Team, NRW
	Undertake practical maintenance and improvements to the AONB RoW network with landowners/managers, groups, volunteers and others	Countryside Access Team, NRW
Objective 17: To improve access opportunities around the Wales Coast Path and the Gower Way	Identify, prioritise and promote circular routes around the Wales Coast Path and the Gower Way	Countryside Access Team, NRW, Gower Society
Objective 18: Ensure that Access Land is available and publicised for use by communities and visitors	Complete review and publication of access land maps under the CRoW Act 2000	Natural Resources Wales, Countryside Access Team, AONB Team, National Trust
	Report on the revised extent and distribution of access land in the AONB	
Objective 19: Develop a clear understanding of the recreation activities in the AONB and around the coast	Analyse and report on recreation activities and identify priority issues for planning and management	AONB Team, Countryside Access Team, Tourism Team, Business Partnership Unit, National Trust
Objective 20: Maintain high quality status and profile of Gower beaches and associated facilities	Annual applications for appropriate beach awards	Business Partnership Unit
	Preparation and implementation of coordinated beach management plans	Business Partnership Unit, AONB Team, Tourism Team, National Trust, Beach owners and managers

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 8: Primary Industries		
Objective 21: Increase the area of the AONB under sustainable land management	Engage in the consultation/development of Wales Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 Axis 2 - Glastir	Welsh Government, AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team, Natural Resources Wales
	Identify and take opportunities to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB through Glastir with applicants, agreement holders and project officers	
	Collaborative work on sustainable land management practices, including strategic wildfire protection and prevention initiatives	Swansea Land Management Group Welsh Government, AONB Team, Nature Conservation Team, National Trust Natural Resources Wales
Objective 22: Support appropriate and sustainable farm and rural diversification and enterprise through the LDP and RDP.	Engage in the consultation/development of Wales Rural Development Plan 2014-20 Axes 3 and 4	AONB Team, Economic Development Team, Rural Development Partnership
	Develop and implement project plan the Swansea RDP 2014-20	
Objective 23: Develop coordinated support for the balanced and sustainable growth of the local fishing industry	Implementation of the Swansea Bay Fisheries Local Development Strategy	Swansea Bay Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG), Economic Development Team, SACRAG

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 9: Tourism		
Objective 24: Support the development of a sustainable tourism industry on Gower	Implementation of the Swansea Bay Destination Management Plan	Destination Management Plan Delivery Groups
	Finalise the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and implement relevant recommendations and actions	AONB Team and other partners identified by the Action Plan

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 10: Transport		
Objective 25: Ensure that the public have the information they need to use sustainable and active travel networks and services	Promote the use and awareness of sustainable and active travel networks and services e.g. walking by bus leaflets, digital media	Baytrans, Rural Development Partnership, AONB Team
Objective 26: Improve the provision of sustainable and active travel networks and services across the AONB	Identify and implement priority schemes for safe walking and cycling in the AONB	Countryside Access Team, AONB Team, Highways Team, Community Councils
	Sustain and improve the Gower Explorer bus service	Baytrans, Countryside Access Team, CCS Transport
	Optimise access points to popular walks – especially the Coast Path – for bus users	Baytrans, Rural Development Partnership, service operator
Objective 27: Develop a better understanding of car parking provision, issues and improvement priorities across the AONB	Undertake a review of car parking provision, issues and improvement priorities	Highways Team, AONB Team, Tourism Team, National Trust, car park owners and operators
Objective 28: Maintain good practice highway improvements across the AONB	Continued implementation of the Highway Design Guide	Highways Team, AONB Team

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 11: Utilities and Communications		
Objective 29: Improve mobile and broadband coverage in the AONB without adversely affecting the special qualities	Work with Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) - Arqiva and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Arqiva, AONB Team, Planning Control
	Work with broadband improvement projects in the AONB - e.g. Superfast Cymru	AONB Team and project delivery teams
Objective 30: Reduce the landscape and visual effects of the power supply network on Gower	Develop and implement landscape improvement schemes through the Western Power Undergrounding Initiative	Western Power Distribution, AONB Team
Objective 31: Have a clear understanding of utility/communications investment and infrastructure priorities that may affect the AONB	Research and report on utility company investment plans - sewerage, water supply, gas, electric, telecomms	AONB Team

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 12: Development and Offshore Activities		
Objective 32: Ensure that spatial planning policies and development control conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB	Engage with policy development and planning control in and around the AONB, including: CCS and Carmarthenshire LDPs, Marine planning, major infrastructure developments	AONB Partnership, AONB Team, LDP Team, Planning Control, Welsh Government, Carmarthenshire County Council, Nature Conservation Team
Objective 33: Improve the quality of the built environment in the AONB	Continue with implementation of the AONB Design Guide and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	AONB Team, LDP Team, Planning Control
	Develop additional guidance for other development issues affecting the landscape character of the AONB, e.g. renewable energy, caravan/camping, car parking	AONB Team, LDP Team, Planning Control
Objective 34: Ensure developments outside the AONB consider potential adverse effects on the AONB special qualities	Monitor and respond to development planning processes and projects outside of the AONB	AONB Team, LDP Team, Planning Control, Nature Conservation Team

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 13: Housing, Community Facilities and Services		
Objective 35: Ensure that LDP policy addresses the affordable housing needs of local communities	Provide a robust evidence base on affordable housing to inform the emerging LDP policies	LDP Team
	Development and adoption of LDP policy that considers the need for affordable housing in local communities	
Objective 36: Identify and respond to trends in the range and extent of community facilities in the AONB	Updates and analysis of ward profiles for AONB wards	LDP Team, AONB Team, Research and Information Team

2014 Objectives	Actions to achieve objective 2014-2018	Lead Partners and CCS Teams
Theme 14: Awareness Raising and Understanding		
Objective 37: Raise the public profile of the AONB special qualities and its environmental, social and economic value	Update and implement the AONB Communications Plan	AONB Team
Objective 38: Increase public access to, appreciation of and involvement with all the special qualities of the AONB, but particularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • Geology • Landscape • Cultural Heritage 	Develop and implement a programme of training and volunteering opportunities and tasks	AONB Team, Gower Landscape Partnership, Nature Conservation Team, GGAT, National Trust
	Develop and implement a programme of intellectual access, walks, talks and events projects	AONB Team, Gower Landscape Partnership, Nature Conservation Team, GGAT, National Trust, Wildlife Trust for SW Wales
Objective 39: Maintain public debate and involvement in AONB issues and management	Enable the Gower AONB Partnership to operate under its Terms of Reference	AONB Team, Democratic Services

Chapter 7: Implementation, Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 Monitoring and review (of both the condition of the AONB resource and the implementation of the Action Plan) are an integral part of the management planning process, underpinned by the statutory requirement to review the management plan every five years.
- 7.2 The Action Plan is a five-year programme, the delivery and timing of which is dependent on availability of funding from existing budgets and/or securing funding from other sources.
- 7.3 Progress will be reported back on an annual basis by the AONB team - through both the Council and the Gower AONB Partnership.
- 7.4 Specifically, monitoring and review are concerned with:
- Checking that identified actions have been undertaken
 - Ensuring that identified actions are delivering the measurable objectives in the management plan
 - Assessing the effects of the management plan on the state of the AONB
 - Considering how these effects should influence the future policies in the management plan.
- 7.5 The table below identifies – for each Theme (and its relevant objectives) – parameters that will be used in the monitoring and review of the AONB. These parameters are categorised as either:
- Indicators – measurable information that helps quantify achievement of the vision/outcomes
 - Performance Measures – measurable information that quantifies if a service/action is working or being implemented.
- 7.6 The preference has been to select Performance Measures and outcome Indicators from datasets and other information that is publically or readily available; references identify these information sources.

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>1: Biodiversity - A landscape rich in wildlife and of international importance, with the key habitats of limestone grasslands, lowland heathland, salt marshes, sand dunes, freshwater marsh and alder and ash woodlands in a good and stable condition</p>	<p>Natura 2000, SSSIs, LNRs and SINCs – number/proportion of features at – or returning to – Favourable Conservation Status</p> <p>Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats – number/proportion of habitats where condition and extent is stable or increasing</p> <p>BAP Species – number/proportion of species where population size and distribution/extent is stable or increasing</p>	<p>Objective 1 - Ensure that Local Development Plan policies and development control decisions conserve and enhance the biodiversity features of the AONB</p>	<p>Evidence-base for biodiversity policy in LDP completed</p> <p>LDP Habitats Regulations Assessment completed</p> <p>LDP biodiversity policy review completed</p> <p>Proportion of AONB planning control assessments and decisions applying LDP biodiversity policy</p>
	<p>Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)- number/proportion of species where population size and distribution/extent is stable or decreasing</p>	<p>Objective 2 - Identify and address management issues and priorities for biodiversity features of the AONB, to achieve Favourable Conservation Status and improve ecological connectivity</p>	<p>Proportion of Natura 2000, SSSIs, LNRs and SINCs with implemented management plans</p> <p>Proportion of BAP Habitats and BAP Species with implemented management plans</p> <p>Proportion of INNS with Implemented management plans</p> <p>Management activity reported on Biodiversity Action Plan Reporting System (BARS)</p> <p>No. of staff/volunteer days spent on practical biodiversity conservation/enhancement projects</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>2: Geology - A geological landscape of international importance which is understood and respected, which continues to provide opportunities for environmental education, and is protected from damaging activities.</p>	<p>SSSIs – number/proportion of geological features at – or returning to – Favourable Conservation status</p> <p>Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) - number/proportion of geological features at – or returning to – Favourable Conservation Status</p>	<p>Objective 3 - Ensure that Local Development Plan policies and development control decisions conserve and enhance the geological features of the AONB</p>	<p>RIGS selection process and criteria established</p> <p>Number of RIGS selected and adopted</p> <p>Evidence-base for geodiversity policy in LDP completed</p> <p>LDP geodiversity policy review completed</p> <p>Number of AONB planning control assessments and decisions applying geodiversity policy</p>
		<p>Objective 4 - Identify and address management issues and priorities for geological features of the AONB, ensuring that features are visible and available for study</p>	<p>Proportion of geological SSSIs with implemented management plans</p> <p>Proportion of RIGS with condition assessments and management plans</p> <p>No. of staff/volunteer days spent on practical geodiversity conservation/ enhancement projects</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>3: Landscape and Seascape - a landscape, which is internationally renowned for its small scale and variety of character and which is closely related to the surrounding sea and, supports sustainable development. A landscape where the built environment is complementary to this character and where the pattern of small fields, tracts of common land, and sunken lanes remain as examples of man's impact in evolving the landscape character</p>	<p>Gower Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Areas with implemented management – methodology to be determined.</p>	<p>Objective 5 – Ensure that spatial planning policies and development control decisions conserve and enhance the landscape, seascape and key views in and out of the AONB</p>	<p>Gower LCA utilised as part of the LDP evidence base</p> <p>Review of NRW LANDMAP data/evidence completed</p> <p>LDP AONB landscape policy review completed</p> <p>Number of AONB planning control assessments and decisions applying AONB landscape policy/Gower AONB Design Guide SPG.</p>
		<p>Objective 6 - Review and address landscape management issues and priorities for key landscape features and views across the AONB</p>	<p>Review of LCA management guidelines completed</p> <p>Landscape Action Plan developed</p> <p>No. of staff/volunteer days spent on practical landscape conservation/ enhancement projects</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
3: Landscape and Seascape Cont...		Objective 7 – Extend the recording and monitoring of the AONB landscape, seascape and key views	Landscape monitoring methodology established Completion of landscape photomonitoring coverage across AONB

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>4: Cultural Heritage - A landscape in which the rich cultural heritage, with its ancient monuments, historic landscapes, parklands, gardens, and historic buildings, is managed to a high standard in recognition of its national importance, and is interpreted to a high standard.</p>	<p>Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Landscapes, Registered Parks and Gardens - number/proportion of features in a stable or improving condition</p> <p>Historic Environment Register – to be determined, but could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • net number of recorded features increasing • number of features retained/enhanced • number of new features identified/assessed • number of features damaged/destroyed 	<p>Objective 8 – Ensure that LDP policies and development control decisions conserve and enhance the archaeological and built heritage features of the AONB</p>	<p>Evidence-base for cultural heritage policy in LDP completed</p> <p>LDP cultural heritage policy review completed</p> <p>Number/proportion of Conservation Areas with Character Appraisals and Management Plans</p> <p>Number of AONB planning control assessments and decisions applying LDP cultural heritage policy and Gower AONB Design Guide SPG</p>
		<p>Objective 9 - Identify and address management issues and priorities for archaeological and built heritage of the AONB</p>	<p>Number/proportion of SAMs and Registered Parks and Gardens with management plans/agreements</p> <p>Number of Listed Buildings remaining on the Buildings at Risk register</p> <p>No. of staff/volunteer days spent on practical heritage conservation/ enhancement projects</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>5: Natural Resources – an environment where the air and water quality is good, and supports quiet recreation and a variety of terrestrial and marine wildlife. Soil quality is maintained to support more environmentally friendly agriculture.</p>	<p>Number of specific Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) screening/monitoring thresholds exceeded in the AONB</p>	<p>Objective 10: Continue to screen and monitor air and water quality across the AONB</p>	<p>No areas on Gower identified as at risk from poor air quality - identified by annual screening as part of CCS Local Air Quality Monitoring requirements</p> <p>Monitoring requirements from Bathing Water Directive - AONB Bathing Water beaches to continue meeting excellent water quality standards</p>
	<p>Number of Designated Bathing Water beaches maintaining excellent water quality</p>	<p>Objective 11: Progress toward Good Ecological Status for waterbodies in the AONB</p>	<p>Measures identified in the Western Wales River Basin Management Plan monitoring and reporting</p>
	<p>Number/proportion of AONB waterbodies at WFD Good Ecological Status/Potential</p>	<p>Objective 12: Develop a better understanding of soil conservation issues in the AONB</p>	<p>Review of AONB soil conservation evidence and issues completed</p>
	<p>Area of land under sustainable land management – baseline and definition to be determined e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of farm units and area of land in Glastir; • Area of common land in Glastir • Area of land owned and managed for/ by environmental bodies 	<p>Objective 13: Develop an understanding of the ecosystem services provided by the AONB.</p>	<p>Review of AONB ecosystem services evidence completed</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>6: Tranquillity - A landscape where tranquillity can still be enjoyed free from noise and visual intrusion. A landscape where the beauty of the starlight night sky can still be appreciated.</p>	<p>Measures to be developed as part of the 2014-18 Action Plan</p>	<p>Objective 14: Assess current levels of tranquillity, noise and light pollution</p>	<p>Scope and methodology of local survey established. Assessment complete</p>
		<p>Objective 15: Ensure that LDP policy and development control decisions protect tranquillity and the night skies of the AONB</p>	<p>Gower LCA utilised as part of the LDP evidence base</p> <p>LDP AONB landscape policy review completed</p> <p>Number of AONB planning control assessments and decisions applying AONB landscape policy/Gower AONB Design Guide SPG.</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>7: Recreation Resources - a network of public rights of way which is fully open, usable and well-maintained, and has been improved to provide access for all as far as possible. Access land which is clearly identified, and is available for use, unless subject to temporary restrictions. Beaches, which are well managed for public use and meet current standards of management and criteria, including those set by award schemes.</p>	<p>Proportion of Public Rights of Way network that is open usable and clearly signposted</p>	<p>Objective 16: To improve the current standard and level of maintenance of public rights of way so that 95% are open, usable and clearly signposted</p>	<p>See indicators</p>
	<p>Bathing Water Directive seasonal Water Quality Sampling results and classification</p>	<p>Objective 17: To improve access opportunities around the Wales Coast Path and the Gower Way</p>	<p>Number of access improvement projects within 1km of the Wales Coast Path and the Gower Way</p>
	<p>Number of beaches with Green Coast or Blue Flag awards</p>	<p>Objective 18: Ensure that Access Land is available and publicised for its use by communities and visitors</p>	<p>Completion of the Countryside and Rights Way Act 2000 map review. Maintenance of the Outdoor Wales on-Line (OWoL) website</p>
	<p>Proportion of AONB access land open and available for public access</p>	<p>Objective 19: Develop a clear understanding of the recreation activities in the AONB and around the coast</p>	<p>Scope of review established Initial audit and review completed</p>
		<p>Objective 20: Maintain high quality status and profile of Gower beaches and associated facilities</p>	<p>See indicators</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>8: Primary Industries - an economically thriving sector where agriculture is more diverse, meets modern day and perceived future requirements and is supported by agri-environment schemes and diversification compatible with the objectives of conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB</p>	<p>To be developed through the Rural Development Plan (RDP), but could include:</p>	<p>Objective 21: Increase the area of the AONB under sustainable land management</p>	<p>Number of farm units and area of land in Glastir Area of common land in Glastir</p>
	<p>Number of active farm units Number of farmers (full/part time) and employees Number of rural businesses</p>	<p>Objective 22: Support appropriate and sustainable farm and rural diversification and enterprised through the LDP and RDP</p>	<p>To be developed through the RDP</p>
		<p>Objective 23: Develop coordinated support for the balanced and sustainable growth of the local fishing industry.</p>	<p>To be developed through the Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) and RDP</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>9: Tourism - A vibrant tourism economy based on the principles of sustainable tourism offering a quality experience, in which the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB, and their quiet enjoyment have top priority. A dynamic tourist industry, which creates economic benefits, and helps support community facilities and infrastructure.</p>	<p>To be developed through the Destination Management Plan/ Sustainable Tourism Strategy</p>	<p>Objective 24 Support the development of a sustainable tourism industry on Gower</p>	<p>To be developed through the Destination Management Plan / Sustainable Tourism Strategy</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
<p>10:Transport - A network and management system, which supports a variety of modes of transport to suit community and visitor needs in a sustainable way, with a minimal impact on the special qualities of the AONB.</p>		<p>Objective 25 Ensure that the public have the information they need to use sustainable and active travel networks and services</p>	
		<p>Objective 26 Improve the provision of sustainable and active travel networks and services across the AONB</p>	<p>Number/frequency of public transport services Public Rights of Way measures – see 7: Recreation Resources Length of safe cycle routes</p>
		<p>Objective 27 Develop a better understanding of car parking provision, issues and priorities across the AONB</p>	<p>Scope of review established Initial audit and review completed</p>
		<p>Objective 28 Maintain good practice highway improvements across the AONB</p>	<p>Proportion of highway projects in the AONB following Highway design guide</p>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
11:Utilities and Communications - A landscape in which the needs of the utility and communication companies, including the supporting infrastructure, can be accommodated without a detrimental impact on the landscape and seascape	See Performance Measures	Objective 29 Improve mobile and broadband coverage in the AONB without adversely affecting the special qualities	Proportion of homes/businesses in AONB with access to broadband
		Objective 30 Reduce the landscape and visual effects of the power supply network on Gower	Number/extent of Western Power Distribution landscape improvement projects
		Objective 31 Have a clear understanding of utility/communications investment and infrastructure priorities that may affect the AONB	Proportion of utility company investment plans assessed for activity within the AONB

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
12: Development and Offshore Activities - A landscape in which the needs of new development including the supporting infrastructure can be accommodated without a detrimental impact on the landscape and seascape, and where the principles of sustainable development are adopted	See Performance Measures	Objective 32: Ensure that spatial planning policies and development control conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB	Progress of LDP tracked through agreed delivery programme
		Objective 33: Improve the quality of the built environment in the AONB	Number/ proportion of projects/ planning decisions applying AONB Design Guide Development of performance monitoring as recommended in 'Delivery of Planning Services in Statutory Designated Landscapes in Wales' ⁴³
		Objective 34: Ensure developments outside the AONB consider potential adverse effects on the AONB special qualities	

⁴³ Land Use Consultants (2012). Delivery of Planning Services in Statutory Designated Landscapes in Wales. Research for Planning Division, Welsh Government. <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/planningresearch/publishedresearch/statutorylandscapes/?lang=en>

Theme Vision / Outcome	Indicators	Objective	Performance Measures
13: Housing, Community Facilities and Services - Thriving diverse communities, which contain a range of housing and facilities to meet the needs of residents and visitors	To be developed through the LDP	Objective 35 Ensure that LDP policy addresses the affordable housing needs of local communities	Evidence-base for affordable housing completed LDP affordable housing policy review completed
		Objective 36 Identify and respond to trends in the range and extent of community facilities in the AONB	To be developed through the LDP
14: Awareness Raising and Understanding - A landscape which is fully recognised for its special qualities and, and is appreciated and understood by residents and visitors	See Performance Measures	Objective 37: Raise the profile of the AONB special qualities and its environmental, social and economic value	To be developed through the AONB Communications Plan
		Objective 38: Increase public access to, appreciation of and involvement with all the special qualities of the AONB, but particularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • Geology • Landscape • Cultural Heritage 	Output data on numbers of volunteers, training events etc as collected developed for the Gower Landscape Partnership
		Objective 39: Maintain public debate and involvement in AONB issues and management	AONB Partnership meetings and events Gower Landscape Partnership meetings

