

**Report of the Cabinet Member for
Enterprise, Development and Regeneration**

Council – 23 March 2017

**APPROVAL OF THE GOWER AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL
BEAUTY (AONB) MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Purpose:	To approve and adopt the Gower AONB Management Plan as Council policy and as Supplementary Planning Guidance
Policy Framework:	Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Council Constitution – Gower AONB Partnership Unitary Development Plan Local Development Plan
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The Gower AONB Management Plan is approved and adopted as Council policy and as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and emerging Local Development Plan (LDP)
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Gower AONB Management Plan (2016) has been produced by the Council's AONB Team on behalf of the Gower AONB Partnership, who approved the Plan (subject to completed amendments) at their meeting on 19 December 2016. Once adopted by the Council as policy, it will also be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) under the current Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP). As SPG, the Management Plan will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within and affecting the AONB. A copy of the Management Plan (2016) is available following this hyperlink:

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

- 1.2 The Gower AONB Partnership ('the Partnership') is the advisory body to the Council, convened by them, to facilitate the management of the Gower AONB. 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 representing a wide range of interests. Terms of Reference are incorporated into the Council's Constitution, and the Partnership includes CCS Councillors, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) representatives plus 10 others elected at the Annual Forum.
- 1.3 The Steering Group of the Partnership is responsible for overseeing the management of the AONB, and is responsible for the development of policy and strategy for the AONB area, particularly through the AONB Management Plan. Specific responsibilities of the Steering Group include the preparation of the AONB Management Plan on behalf of the City and County of Swansea, as well as the coordination of its implementation.
- 1.4 The current adopted Management Plan was first published in 2006 and is overdue for its statutory review. This report summarises the Management Plan review and consultation process. Formal approval of this finalised version of the Management Plan is now required from the Council to approve its adoption as policy and for adoption as SPG.
- 1.5 The Management Plan provides policy and guidance that is broader than SPG to the UDP/LDP and the Constitution therefore provides for it to be adopted by Council.

2. Management Plan – Overview and Review Process

- 2.1 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.
- 2.3 This first review of the Management Plan was initiated in 2010, but has been protracted for a number of reasons. Production of the Gower AONB Management Plan (2016) has been preceded by a number of preparation stages, 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.

2.4 The latest version of the Management Plan retains much of the structure and format of the 2006 Plan and comprises 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

3.0 Consultation on Draft Management Plan

3.1 Formal consultation responses on the draft Management Plan were received from the following organisations:

- Natural Resources Wales
- The National Trust
- The Gower Society
- The Countryside Management System Consortium
- Swansea Bay Sustainable Travel and Transport Partnership (Baytrans)
- Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT)
- Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales
- South Wales Police
- Friends of Swansea Horses

Responses were also received from ten private individuals/businesses.

- 3.2 The attached Consultation Report details the responses received and the consequent amendments have been incorporated into the final version of the Management Plan.
- 3.3 The Gower AONB Partnership gave their approval to the Management Plan at their meeting 19 December 2016. Approval was subject to a small number of minor amendments that have been incorporated into the attached version.

4. Equality and Engagement Implications

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening was carried out which indicated that, at this level, a full EIA was not required. Any actions undertaken in delivery of the Gower AONB Management Plan will be subject to the standard EIA process.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Whilst there are no immediate financial implications arising from this report, acceptance of this policy could result in additional expenditure at a future time. Acceptance of the policy does not mean that additional resources will be made available and it should be assumed that future spending needs will be contained within existing budget provision and have full and due regard to the budget principles set out in 'Sustainable Swansea – Fit for the Future'. Delivery of the Action Plan in Chapter 6 is dependent on the AONB Partnership organisations (not just the Council) working together to secure resources and deliver projects.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council have a legal duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to publish and review the Management Plan for the Gower AONB. The Management Plan is expected to '...formulate their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it'.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- Appendix A Gower AONB Management Plan – hyperlink to be provided
- Appendix B Consultation Responses