

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE GOWER AONB PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP

HELD AT BARHAM CENTRE, MOUNT PISGAH CHAPEL, PARKMILL,
SWANSEA ON MONDAY, 27 MARCH 2017 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

M C Child

Councillor(s)

L James

Councillor(s)

K E Marsh

Representing Organisations:

R Button	Tourism Swansea Bay
R Cooper	Llanrhidian Higher Community Council
J Davies	Bay Trans
S Heard	Gower Riding Club/Port Eynon Community Council
Councillor P R Hood-Williams	Upper Killay Community Council
G Howe	Gower Society
H Osborn	Natural Resources Wales

Officer(s)

Chris Howell	Head of Waste Management and Parks
Chris Lindley	Gower AONB Team Leader
Paul Meller	Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Manager
Jeremy Parkhouse	Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

B Parry	Walking Forum
I Button	Rhossili Community Council

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): J E C Harris
Independent Member(s): D Vine
Officer(s): M Scott

31 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.**

The Chair welcomed all present to Mount Pisgah Chapel and commenced proceedings.

32 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS.**

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

Councillor P R Hood-Williams - Minute No.38 - I am a member of the Gower Landscape Partnership – personal.

Councillor P Lloyd – Minute No.'s 37 and 38 – I am a member of the Gower Landscape Partnership and the Sustainable Development Fund Panel – personal.

Councillor K E Marsh - Minute No.38 - I am a member of the Gower Landscape Partnership – personal.

33 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group Meeting held on 19 December 2016 be accepted as a correct record.

34 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES.**

Toilet Provision and Cleanliness on Gower

Further to discussions at previous meetings, Chris Howell, Head of Waste Management and Parks provided the Group with an update regarding toilet provision and cleanliness on Gower.

He stated that the review of toilet provision being undertaken by the Authority had been placed on hold, subject to the introduction of the Public Health (Wales) Bill, which could make the provision of toilet facilities for public use a statutory requirement for local authorities. The Authority would therefore look to sustain its current provision and to improve partnership working such as the agreement at Southgate whereby a local café had agreed to manage the toilet facilities.

He added that discussions with the National Trust regarding the asset transfer of the toilet facilities had been positive and matters were now being dealt with by Legal Services. He expressed concern regarding the toilet facilities at Oxwich and highlighted that the second block was owned by Penrice Estate.

The Group asked a number of questions of the Officer / Councillor M C Child, Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Healthy City which were responded to accordingly. Discussions centred around the following: -

- Disappointment was expressed that cleanliness levels had not been maintained. It was explained that the Council operated different systems in respect of toilet blocks. Port Eynon was managed by a static Council operative who lived locally, while other facilities were attended to by mobile Council operatives;
- It was queried whether the Council calculated the income made from tourism and set this against expenditure, in order to make Gower look more attractive to tourists and to maintain facilities. It was explained that Departments had to work within the budgets provided and that the Authority received very little direct income from tourism compared to businesses. It was therefore not possible to calculate income against expenditure;
- Capital income was largely spent on schools and the Council was looking to work in partnership in order to maintain and improve toilet provision;

- The lack of capacity to deal with periods of high demand. It was explained that the Council could change the way it managed some sites in order to counter demand but it could not change the resource levels;
- The Council very much hoped to shortly finalise the agreement with National Trust regarding the toilets at Rhossili;
- Very little investment had been made on Gower compared to other areas of Swansea such as the City Centre and concern was expressed that a large number of residents on Gower had to pay the highest rates;
- Previously, different departments within the Council were responsible for beach cleaning, toilets, cleansing and waste. This had recently changed and now came under the Head of Waste Management and Parks;
- While the Service needed additional funding and facilities, the reality was that this was not going to happen due to budget cuts.

Mobile Phone and Broadband Reception on Gower

Roger Button reported that while the reception in some areas of Gower had improved, the service in other areas was very poor.

35 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS.**

There were none.

36 **AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN - COUNCIL APPROVAL AND ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT.**

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided the Gower AONB Management Plan, which had been adopted as Council policy and as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Council on Thursday, 23 March 2017.

He highlighted the objectives and actions contained within the Plan where little or no progress had occurred. He added that the Steering Group would review the Action Plan next year.

The Steering Group discussed the contents of the report including the following:

- No progression in respect of 11 objectives out of 39 was a positive result;
- The Authority had made good progress in respect of the current Action Plan;
- Objective 13 – Continue to screen and monitor air and water quality across the AONB and the requirements of providing both.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

37 **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND UPDATE.**

The Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report on the Sustainable Development Fund.

The report highlighted funding for 2016/17 as follows:

Welsh Government had provided £55,000 for 2016/17, with an additional £15,000 confirmed in March 2017. These funds had now been spent and the funding re-claimed from Welsh Government.

A total of 20 projects were funded by the SDF scheme during 2016/17, with a City and County of Swansea Management Fee of £5,500.

Total Funds available	£ 70,000.00
Committed Funds	£ 70,003.98
Uncommitted Funds	- £ 3.98
Applications in progress	£ 0.00

It was added that Welsh Government had not yet confirmed the SDF budget for 2017/18, but had verbally indicated that it would be £55,000.

There were currently 8 projects with SDF funding for 2017/18, with a further 3 applications in progress.

The Committed Funds figure included the City and County of Swansea Management Fee of £5,500 (10%).

Total Funds available	£ 55,000.00
Committed Funds	£ 31,410.00
Uncommitted Funds	£ 23,590.00
Applications in progress	£ 4,800.00

The Group discussed the information contained within the report and it was suggested an annual SDF report be provided.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) An annual SDF Panel report be provided to the Steering Group.

38 **GOWER LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS REPORT.**

The Gower AONB Team Leader presented a Gower Landscape Partnership (GLP) Progress Report. He provided an update on GLP projects and stated that the Partnership would end in March 2018 and it was important that a legacy remained.

As part of the report he provided a short film relating to a collection of stories and historical information of the 189 ship wrecks around the Gower coast, which received very positive feedback from the Group. The film involved children from Hafod Junior School, Swansea and provided an example of the outcomes GLP could provide.

The Group also commented on the quality of the work at the GLP project to rebuild the dry stone wall at Mewslade. Comments were also made in relation to effectively using remaining grant money, future funding / organisation after March 2018.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) Gower Landscape Partnership be included as a standard item of future Steering Group agendas.

39 **LIGHT POLLUTION.**

Gordon Howe, Gower Society presented a report regarding Light Pollution.

He explained that for some considerable time the Society had been observing an increase in light pollution on the Gower AONB. This had been emphasised by the results of the excellent work that the City and County of Swansea had carried out on street light replacements over the last three years. These lights had, we understand, been specifically installed to prevent upward light pollution as well as saving running costs as they use less electricity.

A number of examples of light pollution were provided because they notably impinged upon the Dark Skies Zone (a National Designated Scheme) in the Gower AONB and did not appear to comply with the excellent City & County of Swansea 'Lighting Guidance for Gower AONB' that came into force approximately 10 years ago.

It was added that the examples were not conclusive and some were worse than others. However, it was explained that these were examples that appeared to contradict the Dark Skies Designation and the Lighting Guide.

He concluded that there was no question that there were many other examples within the AONB and it was generally caused by lack of appreciation of the impact and none compliance with the Lighting Guide. He cited Pitton Cross Camp Site as an excellent corrective lighting scheme completed a couple of years ago and it had made a significant beneficial impact on the night landscape and skies.

The Steering Group discussed the contents of the report, particularly the light pollution caused by Golf Club Driving Range at Machynys, Llanelli; collaborative working with other AONB's in Wales to attain dark sky designation; and appreciating the dark skies on Gower, including requesting that the AONB Team scope what would be required to get Gower designated as a Registered Dark Sky Reserve with the International Dark Skies Association.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) The Gower AONB Team scope what would be required to get Gower designated as a Registered Dark Sky Reserve with the International Dark Skies Association.

40 **GOWER AONB PARTNERSHIP - ANNUAL FORUM AND STEERING GROUP ELECTIONS.**

The Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report which outlined the arrangements in respect of the Partnership Annual Forum at Reynoldston Village Hall, on Monday, 26th June 2017, at 7pm. It also detailed the role of the Steering Group and the requirements of members.

It was added that the Steering Group acted as the managing body of the AONB Partnership comprising up to 6 Councillors, 2 representatives from Natural Resources Wales and 10 other representatives. In May, the Council would invite nominations for the election of 10 other representatives, with information sent out to the members of the AONB Partnership and promoted through local media. The appointments would be two years.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

41 **FUTURE LANDSCAPES WALES. (VERBAL)**

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided a verbal update regarding Future Landscapes Wales. He reported recent progress made by Welsh Government in setting up a working group, chaired by Dafydd Ellis-Thomas A.M. and informed the Group that a stakeholder event scheduled for mid-March had to be cancelled.

He added that an additional stakeholder event scheduled in May in North Wales would publish the final report.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) The Gower AONB Team Leader circulates the final report to the Steering Group.

42 **REDUCED BUS FARES.**

John Davies, Bay Trans reported that a 1 year experiment had been negotiated to reduce bus fares for single journeys travelling from Gower towards Swansea. The fare travelling east would be 30% cheaper and the idea was to attract people to use the empty seats.

A marketing campaign would highlight this change, which would encourage sustainable travel.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

CHAIR