



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

External Funding Panel – 6 June 2018

Natural Resources Wales – Gower AONB Partnership Programme 2018-2021

Purpose:	This report presents information in regard to an offer of funding from NRW, for the Gower AONB Partnership Programme 2018-2021.
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For Information

1. Background

- 1.1 AONBs are of equal status in planning terms with National Parks and these areas are designated to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of their landscape character and quality. AONBs are landscapes of national importance and are internationally recognised by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as Category V Protected Areas - living, working landscapes, as well as internationally important areas for landscape, natural and cultural heritage.
- 1.2 The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 requires Swansea Council 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...” As the local authority with responsibility for Gower AONB, Swansea Council is required under statute to prepare and publish a management plan for Gower AONB.
- 1.3 The implementation of the Gower AONB Management Plan is an important tool for the delivery of NRW’s statutory purpose for the sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR) and Area Statements when they are published in 2019. This application for NRW grant aid will facilitate activities and processes that ensure alignment and effective delivery of both policy documents.

- 1.4 The proposed programme will deliver a wide range of outputs by the Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Section of Swansea Council and its partners; we have had a successful and longstanding partnership with NRW (and its predecessor bodies) for more than 25 years. The Gower AONB Partnership acts both as an advisor to Swansea Council, and as the management body for the AONB – NRW is a part of the partnership, facilitating both management and monitoring.

2. Funding Offer

- 2.1 This offer of funding will provide £216,671 over three years, against eligible costs of £288,895, or 75% of actual costs, whichever is the lower amount. The grant uses existing CCS revenue budgets to provide match-funding.
- 2.2 The grant will cover the period April 2018 – March 2021, with a final payment in April 2021.

3. Equality & Engagement Implications

- 3.1 This offer of funding does not have implications for equality or engagement issues directly.
- 3.2 The AONB Partnership undertakes community engagement as part of its on-going work, to raise awareness and identify solutions in-relation to environment issues including wellbeing, climate change and natural resource management. The approaches, techniques and scale will vary between projects, but will always be guided by best practice, and always seeks to widen inclusion and foster wider community engagement.
- 3.3 The funding will support the delivery of Public Service Boards (PSB) Well-being Objectives.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Management Plan will enable Swansea Council to discharge its statutory duty in relation to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty;
- 4.2 It will also facilitate the delivery of national policy at a local level, and ensure the delivery of the statutory AONB Management Plan.
- 4.3 The terms and conditions of the offer of grant funding are likely to be binding. The Council will need to ensure that it complies with the same. The Council will also need to comply with its Contract Procedure Rules and any relevant procurement legislation when utilising the funding to procure any goods or services.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The grant uses existing revenue budgets to draw down external funding, which will enable the Teams involved to provide an enhanced service, with minimal council resources (match funding can also include staff & volunteer time and other external funding). If Council budgets are reduced, then work plans would be revised to reduce overall costs accordingly.
- 5.2 This offer of funding helps to support a small number of staff posts within the Nature Conservation Team.
- 5.3 The acceptance of the offer of funding would not increase the existing or future financial liabilities of Swansea Council.

Appendices:

- Appendix A - NRW AONB Programme 2018-21 – Application Form – 5 March 2018

Background Papers:

- NRW AONB National Partnership Programme 2018-21 - Guidance Notes
- NRW Grant 28057 – Signed Grant Acceptance Letter – 8 May 2018