



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 6 December 2021 at 2.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

### **Councillors**

M C Child	P R Hood-Williams	L James
M Thomas		

### **Steering Group Members**

J France	S Heard	G Howe
P Jenkins	H Osborn	B Parry
P Thornton		

### **Officer(s)**

Chris Lindley	Gower AONB Team Leader
Mike Scott	Gower AONB Officer
Jeremy Parkhouse	Democratic Services Officer
Deb Hill	Nature Conservation Team Leader
Ruth Henderson	Senior Planning Officer

### **Apologies for Absence**

Councillors: A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: R Button and D P Tucker

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## **19 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

## **20 Minutes.**

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 4 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

It was noted that the Gower AONB Tourism Pressures Working Group had met for preliminary discussions on 22 November 2021. Officers would be contacting stakeholders to provide examples for an action log and the Working Group would meet to discuss the findings in the New Year.

## 21 **Mass Participation Events.**

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report which responded to the previous concerns raised by the Steering Group regarding the potential impacts of mass participation events on Gower AONB. The report outlined the current context and sought the views of the Steering Group.

It was added that these events were focussed either on sporting activity (such as marathons and triathlons) or challenge events marketed at a broader audience that focussed on raising money for charities (e.g. Macmillan Mighty Hike). The events tended to be promoted, organised and delivered by professional companies and/or charitable organisations.

The opportunities to showcase the landscape, its wildlife and culture was highlighted along with the financial opportunities for local businesses and the health and well-being benefits are those participating.

The potential negative impacts were also outlined and reference was made to the Chartered Institute of Fundraising published guidance on how to run outdoor challenge events in the UK. The guidance highlighted that fundraisers and charities should be aware of the impact on local communities, infrastructure, and to the environment in putting on these events and take all reasonable steps to minimise the effect. It further highlighted how the impact on local residents, roads, other users, facilities, footpaths, wildlife and the wider landscape could be damaging, and could damage an organisation's reputation if the event failed to take steps to minimise their effect.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- The effect of the ironman event upon the Gower Show in August 2022;
- Policies of National Parks / AONB's dealing with such events and the cumulative impact / frequency of the events;
- The lack of co-ordination / notification being provided by event organisers;
- Defining when events become mass participation events;
- The need for a central point of registration for events and monitoring how events were organised / whether companies followed the correct procedures;
- How some events are privately organised for financial gain;
- Organisers utilising the National Association of Fundraisers who have a code of conduct for organisations to follow;
- The need to consult with Swansea Council's Special Events Team regarding the best way forward;
- The need for events to be run in an environmentally sustainable way.

**Resolved** that the contents of the report / discussions be noted and an update be provided at the next scheduled meeting.

## 22 Clyne Valley Country Park.

Barbara Parry presented a report on Clyne Valley Country Park which outlined the background, aims, role and work of the Clyne Valley Community Project.

It was outlined that the Clyne Valley Community Project (CVCP) was established 10 years ago to:

- improve and maintain Access in the Clyne Valley
- protect and enhance the natural habitat of species and to encourage and promote biodiversity in the Clyne Valley, maintaining as small a footprint as possible
- encourage research and interpretation of the history and archaeology of the Valley
- promote the health and well-being of users of the Clyne Valley
- develop and encourage the use and enjoyment of the Clyne Valley as a community resource for leisure pursuits, educational purposes and family activities

CVCP is a volunteer organisation and agreed a Management Agreement with Swansea Council, who own the 700 acres of the Country Park. CVCP endeavour to maintain and share the riches of Clyne Valley with the community. It is a huge task:

Over recent months had:

- Carried out a Japanese Knotweed survey of the whole valley
- Cleared the Mumbles Road Station of vegetation
- Held a 'Get to Know the Valley' day of walks and activities
- Completed several litter picks
- Trampled the bracken encroaching upon the fruit trees in Kate's Orchard
- Pulled and cut back Pheasant Berry
- Provided the muscle and graft to construct 3 new bridges across the river Clyne
- Resumed interviewing and recording locals to add to our History Archive
- Brush cut several paths.

It was added that this beautiful green valley, 3 miles from the centre of Swansea, had long been a wonderful resource for many people and was 'discovered' by even more people during the restrictions of the pandemic.

Since the Environment Section at Swansea Council had recently taken responsibility for the Country Park, CVCP had worked closely with them in planning and implementing improvements in the Valley and this partnership had continued with more developments to come. The AONB team would be preparing a Management Plan for the Valley and this month Chris Lindley and Ursula Jones provided a presentation to CVCP members on the 'Future of Clyne Valley', explaining the process they were following to construct a Management Plan.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- the excellent work and input of CVCP;
- the need for more resources / co-ordination to be provided with the introduction of / to support the management plan in order to protect the park as it is a primary asset;
- future monitoring of the management plan by the Steering Group;
- how Parks do not manage the park as it is historically managed by another department of the Council;
- the Council / NRW supporting the work of the volunteers through partnership working;
- the need to preserve and enjoy the park.

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

**23 Report on the Review of the Gower Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study for Caravan and Camping Sites 2014.**

Ruth Henderson, Senior Planning Officer presented a 'for information' report which provided a review of the Gower Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study for Caravan and Camping Sites 2014.

The background to the Study was provided and it was outlined that the Study had proved a useful tool in guiding new tourism development to less conspicuous locations where the detrimental impact on the designated landscape and seascape was minimised.

It was added that an update of the Study was required to accurately reflect the landscape impacts of caravan and campsites, document any material landscape changes and monitor any impacts of development since 2014, in order to provide an up-date evidence document to support the LDP.

Furthermore, the introduction and popularity of alternative forms of accommodation since the 2014 Study such as pods, lodges, shipping containers and other forms of non-operational development were becoming much more popular as forms of holiday accommodation and should be considered.

John Champion Associates had been commissioned by Swansea Council to undertake the review, which had been part funded by AONB Grant monies from NRW. The review was building on the existing study and would involve a two-stage process.

It was explained that field visits were undertaken in March and August 2021 and a preliminary Stage 1 report had been submitted to the Council for review and the consultants were in the early stages of progressing Stage 2, which was due early in 2022. It was anticipated that the Study would be used as an evidence base document in order to inform the LDP.

The Steering Group commented upon the number of huts, yurts, tents, shepherd huts and extensions had been erected / built without planning permission and the need for the system to be respected. Sewage problems relating to such

developments were also causing issues on Gower. The Steering Group was advised to report such issues to planning enforcement.

## **24 Sustainable Development Fund - Financial Report.**

Mike Scott, Gower AONB Officer presented the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Panel Financial Summary report 'for information'.

It was highlighted that Welsh Government had confirmed the SDF budget for 2021/22 at £100,000.

15 projects had been approved, with £100,000 committed, fully committing the funds for 2020/21.

The Committed Funds figure included the CCS Management Fee of £7,500.55.

Total Funds available	£100,000
Committed Funds	£100,000
Uncommitted Funds	£0
Applications in progress	£0

## **25 Proposed Changes to Election Process for SDF Panel Members.**

The Gower AONB Officer updated the Steering Group regarding the amendments being introduced by Welsh Government to the process of appointing to the Sustainable Development Fund Grant Panel.

It was added that the changes were aimed at ensuring that panels consisted of a diverse demographic of members, with representation from the AONB Partnership.

To accommodate this, the process would be amended to appoint members of the SDF Grant Panel, and the SDF Appeals Panel. To meet the Welsh Government's guidance, the Steering Group would be requested to appoint two members of each panel each year, for a term of two years. This would enable a rolling appointment process, keeping the skills built up by the panel membership, while also introducing new members of the panel. Annual introductions to the work of the SDF grants panel would be provided as part of the established programme of meetings.

The Steering Group would be asked to nominate potential panel members to be appointed at the March 2022 Steering Group meeting.

It was noted that the Council's legal advisors had confirmed that a change to the Terms of Reference of the AONB Partnership were not required to accommodate the amendments.

## **26 Proposed Landscape & Biodiversity Grant Scheme.**

The Gower AONB Officer presented a 'for information' report regarding the proposed landscape and biodiversity grant scheme.

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Cont'd

It was explained that the grant scheme, run as a subsidiary of the Sustainable Development Fund and managed locally on behalf of Welsh Government, aimed to support a range of landscape and biodiversity enhancement initiatives within Gower AONB.

The grant is aimed at landowners, Community Councils and community spaces, where biodiversity gains could engage and benefit those who live within the local community. Farmers could apply for funding but must not be in receipt of an agri-environment grant for the same scheme. Priority would be given to schemes where the greatest biodiversity gain and community benefit could be demonstrated.

The range of activity, eligibility, funding and application process were also explained.

The Steering Group discussed the specific funding available, the inclusion of schemes addressing climate change and how the scheme had different outputs to Sustainable Development funding.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm

**Chair**