



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader
Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 14 March 2022
AONB Grants 2022/23 Report

Swansea Council receives a number of grants for activities and projects that contribute toward the delivery of the Gower AONB Management Plan. This paper gives the AONB Steering Group a quick summary of the current principal grants supporting the AONB and a forward look into the next financial year.

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) – Established in 2001, the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) supports innovative, sustainable projects in Wales's five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The Fund is divided equally between the five AONBs. The SDF supports projects that work to enhance and conserve natural beauty, wildlife, culture, landscape, land use and community within the context of the goals and sustainable development principles in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and the priorities set out in Valued and Resilient: the Welsh Government's Priorities for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks.

This grant is provided by Welsh Government and the £100k budget in both 2020/21 and 2021/22 was fully spent/committed.

Subject to finalisation/confirmation of the Welsh Government budget, we are anticipating that the SDF will continue into 2022/23, although no figure has been agreed.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) partnership grant – NRW has provided a grant aid programme to Welsh AONBS since it was created in 2013. This grant typically supports the work of the AONB, Countryside Access and Nature Conservation Teams as well as planning policy work in the AONB.

This grant has been typically in a multi-year offer, although the current grant is a single year offer of c.£68k plus further capital funding for specific biodiversity projects through the NRW Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Fund.

Discussions are ongoing with NRW regarding their support for the AONB. Again, any offer will be subject to confirmation of Welsh Government budgets, but we understand that NRW are considering offering a two-year programme offer.

Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) – The SLSP programme of capital investment across Wales's eight Designated Landscapes ensures that they can contribute to key Welsh Government objectives. The programme has four main strands:

- Decarbonisation – through decarbonisation of Authority activity and assets, schemes to enable decarbonisation in communities including appropriate renewable energy, and carbon sequestration schemes in the landscape
- Nature-based solutions and nature recovery - including projects that improve connectivity and resilience of ecosystems in designated areas being mindful of climate change adaptation
- Sustainable tourism - including improving visitor facilities and infrastructure, helping landscapes recover from the impact of tourism, prepare for changing tourism patterns following Covid, and improve and protect valued cultural and heritage assets.
- Supporting communities to respond to COVID and promote a Green Recovery - enabling designated landscape bodies to assist local communities to deal with the impacts of COVID and undertake activities focused on a Green Recovery.

Project proposals – including collaborative projects - are brought forward by the designated landscapes and allocated funding from Welsh Government via the Tirweddau Cymru - Landscapes Wales partnership. The Gower AONB SLSP grant was £185k in 2020/21, and £225k in 2021/2.

Subject to finalisation/confirmation of the Welsh Government budget, we are anticipating that the SLSP will continue into 2022/23 – and will potentially be a multi-year allocation - although no budget figure has been agreed.

Welsh Government revenue grant – Welsh Government offered a one-off revenue grant of £75k for Gower AONB for 2021/22. The grant enabled the recruitment of the Gower AONB Communities and Nature Project Officer on a fixed-term basis (to end of March 2022). We understand that Welsh Government are proposing to allocate further revenue funding for each AONB in Wales in 2022-23, with indicative allocations for the next two financial years. The allocation is to address capacity issues within AONB teams in ramping up work on biodiversity, decarbonisation, community resilience and sustainable tourism.

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