



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 14 March 2022

Gower Dark Sky Community Award Application: Update

The Steering Group were last briefed on this at the March 2021 meeting, which was minuted as: -

'The Gower AONB Team Leader reported that as part of Gower AONB's pending application for Dark Sky Community Award with the International Dark Sky Association (IDA), it was required to undertake annual monitoring of sky quality within the AONB.

The latest of these was undertaken on the evening of 9 January 2021. The survey period was moonless and was for the most part cold and clear with excellent visibility, with only light cloud early on during the first part of the survey. Sky Quality Meters (SQMs) were used to collect readings at 42 locations across Gower. SQM readings were converted to Naked Eye Limiting Magnitude (NELM) for ease of understanding. Annex 1 provided a summary table of results from 2019-2021 for comparison.

It was explained that the 2021 results for Gower appeared broadly comparable with the results of previous years. Locations furthest west, further from Swansea and less-populated, were consistent in producing the best readings. Readings at monitoring points from Bracelet Bay westward along south Gower, were all poorer than in previous years, but with no apparent cause. Monitoring in 2022 would consider this further.

It was added that these monitoring reports would form part of the Gower AONB formal application to the IDA for the Dark Sky Community Award, which was pending whilst the revision of Gower AONB Design Guide was completed and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The Steering Group queried the slow progress and it was explained that the Council had to follow the correct procedures, including consultation. It was added that improvement works were ongoing, particularly in relation to street lighting and an improvement plan was in place.'

The 'Placemaking Guidance for the Gower AONB' is now approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Swansea Council's Planning Committee. Gower AONB team can now complete the International Dark Sky Community application to the IDA. Relevant activities since New Year 2022 include:

- Renewed discussions with IDA representatives regarding completion of the application to their revised 2018 Guidelines for International Dark Sky Communities
- Completion of the annual sky quality monitoring – undertaken at the end of January, with further fieldwork in early March - but the monitoring report is still to be completed
- Participation in the first Welsh Dark Skies Week (19-27 February) – with all the Welsh National Parks and AONBs delivering a programme of online and live events:
[Welsh Dark Skies Week \(discoveryinthedark.wales\)](https://discoveryinthedark.wales)
- An ongoing programme of converting street lighting within Gower AONB to LED Dark Sky friendly units by Swansea Council Highways Lighting team

Gower AONB Team will complete drafting of the final application with the working group for submission to the IDA as soon as possible. There will be a further update for the Gower AONB Annual Forum.

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

7 March 2022