



## Report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance

Special Cabinet – 29 September 2022

### Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Grant Programmes 2022-2025

<b>Purpose:</b>	To seek approval from Cabinet to accept grant programmes from Welsh Government, totalling £1,025,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 5.7
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Gower AONB Management Plan; LDP
<b>Consultation:</b>	Local Members, Access to Services, Finance, Legal
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that Cabinet:  1) Approve the acceptance of the grant programmes set out in paragraph 1.2 of this report in the sum of £1,025,000 to enable the projects to be developed and delivered within a three-year programme 2022-2025.
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#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Welsh Government Landscape and Outdoor Recreation budget allocations 2022-25 include grant-aid support programmes for all Welsh AONBs and National Parks. For Gower AONB, Welsh Government has offered a total of £1,025,000 over this period.
- 1.2 In summary, the grant offers which are the subject of this report are as follows:

<b>Sustainable Development Fund and AONB Revenue Grant</b>	£20,000 annually (SDF) £50,000 annually (AONB Revenue)
<b>Sustainable Development Fund (Variation)</b>	£80,000 annually
<b>Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places Programme</b>	£175,000 2022/23 £200,000 2023/24 £200,000 2024/25

- 1.3 The programmes and projects all support and contribute to the Welsh Government's priorities for the Welsh AONBs and National Parks, and implement Council policies in the LDP and the Gower AONB Management Plan. Overall, the grant aid will enable nature recovery actions, improve the provision of local access to green spaces and their sustainable management in Gower AONB across a planned three year programme.
- 1.4 Delivery of the grant programmes will be coordinated by the Natural Environment Section, with works being implemented by agreement with other Council teams and our local stakeholders. Officers are drawing up detailed specifications and work plans for each project.

## 2.0 Programme outlines

- 2.1 **Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)** - is a grant-giving scheme supporting innovative, sustainable projects in Wales's five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (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.
- 2.2 Total funding for the SDF is £100k annually until end of March 2025. The SDF is managed by the AONB Team, with grant applications considered and determined by the Gower AONB Partnership.
- 2.3 **AONB Revenue Grant** – This grant enables the continued employment of the Gower AONB Nature and Communities Project Officer to deliver nature recovery actions in the AONB and provide ecological support on the planning and implementation of other projects, including, the completion of the Clyne Valley Country Park (CVCP) management plan and Japanese knotweed control programmes in CVCP and Ilston Valley.
- 2.4 **Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places (SLSP) Programme** – This programme of investment in AONBs and National Parks ensures that they can contribute to key Welsh Government objectives around 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

2.5 Project proposals were brought forward by the designated landscapes and allocated funding from Welsh Government via the Tirweddau Cymru - Landscapes Wales partnership. Gower AONB has been offered funding across four projects/programmes:

- Pennard Castle – completion of a project to improve public access to and interpretation of the Castle and improve the condition of the Scheduled Monument. Two year project to end of March 2024.
- Gower Nature Recovery Programme - to improve nature recovery and ecosystem resilience in Gower AONB, including work on Swansea Council Local Nature Reserves. Three year programme to end of March 2025
- Gower Places of Worship - This investment will enable the stakeholders on these sites to care for and improve their biodiversity value into the long-term. Target species include: bats; swifts; barn owls; pollinators; reptiles. Three year programme to end of March 2025
- Clyne Valley Country Park - This SLSP proposal will implement the emerging actions and recommendations from the management plan focussed on nature recovery, environmental remediation visitor facilities, safety and signage. Three year programme to end of March 2025.

### **3.0 Legal Implications**

3.1 The Council must comply with the grant offer terms and conditions and must ensure that any procurement of goods, works or services complies with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

### **4.0 Integrated Assessment Implications**

4.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

4.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

4.4 An IIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that the acceptance of the offer of Welsh Government funding does not require a full IIA report. The individual projects will be subject to individual IIA screening, once more details are available. The Welsh Government offer is specifically for these programmes, which will include actions to improve existing maintenance and safety issues. In developing the projects, the increased provision of access and the removal of barriers will be a fundamental consideration. The recognition of "least restrictive option" approaches is fundamental to the work of the Teams involved, leading to the provision of "all-ability access" wherever possible. Our approach will ensure that consultation takes place at the most appropriate stage.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 The Authority already has responsibilities in these areas, and this offer of funding will assist the Council in achieving its ambitions as set out in a number of plans and policies (for example the Local Development Plan and the Gower AONB Management Plan). The funding has been offered at 100% and is expected to cover the costs of the projects.

### **Background Papers:**

SDF and Revenue Grant Offer Letter 2022-25

SDF (Variation) Offer Letter 2022-25

SLSP Grant Offer Letter 2022-25

**Appendices:** Appendix A – IIA