

Gower AONB Advisory Group - Terms of Reference

STATUTORY ROLE & FUNCTION

- 1) The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 places a duty upon the City & County of Swansea ('the Council') to "prepare and publish a management plan which formulates their policy for the management of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it".
- 2) The Act also places a statutory duty on other relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB when exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the AONB. "Relevant authorities" are any public bodies including local and statutory authorities, parish councils and statutory regulators.
- 3) The Gower AONB Advisory Group is an advisory group to the Council, convened by them, to facilitate the management of the Gower AONB, in fulfilment of their legal responsibilities and duties with regard to the Gower AONB.

STRUCTURE

- 4) The **Gower AONB Advisory Group** will comprise:
 - a maximum of 6 Councillors (including the Councillor who is Chair of the Planning Committee), who will be appointed by the Council.
 - 2 representatives from Natural Resources Wales
 - 10 other local members, drawn from the following local interests as appropriate:
 - Community Councils
 - Nature conservation
 - History and archaeology
 - Land owning/farming/forestry
 - Commoners
 - Rural business
 - Tourism
 - Recreation
 - Local interest groups
 - Residents of the Gower AONB
- 5) The Advisory Group will be chaired by the Chair of the Planning Committee, with a Vice Chair selected from the members of the Advisory Group.
- 6) The term of appointment will be the same as the electoral term.
- 7) The Advisory Group will invite applications for new members towards the end of the term of appointment. The new members will be appointed by the

incoming Councillors appointed to the Advisory Group following Local Government elections.

- 8) The Advisory Group will encourage applications from individuals who are local, and can represent local interest groups, with a selection process based on their ability to contribute to the Advisory Group, through their local knowledge, experience and representation of that interest group.

PURPOSE & RESPONSIBILITY

- 9) The Advisory Group's purpose is to oversee the management of the AONB and is responsible for the development of policy and strategy for the AONB, particularly through the AONB Management Plan, and influencing the policies and strategies of others. The Advisory Group will also take and support action to conserve and promote the AONB.
- 10) The members of the Advisory Group will appoint the following sub-groups:
 - a) **Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Grants Panel.**
 - This panel will decide on grant applications to the SDF from funding obtained from the Welsh Government. It will determine how best to use that funding and will operate an appeals process when considering how funding should be spent.
 - This panel will comprise the Chair of the Planning Committee (who will act as Chair) and seven other members.
 - The panel will be supported by the AONB Officer, and a representative from NRW, as observers.
 - b) **The SDF Grants Appeals Panel**
 - This Panel will handle disputes on how funding should be spent and will decide on appeals for grant applications refused by the SDF Grants Panel.
 - The SDF Appeals Panel will comprise the Vice Chair of the Advisory Group (who will act as Chair of the SDF Appeal Panel) and seven other members, who do not already sit on the SDF Grant Panel.
 - The panel will be supported by the AONB Officer, and a representative from NRW, as observers.
 - c) **Other sub-groups as required**
- 11) The Advisory Group will have the power to co-opt individuals or organisations (to itself, or to sub-groups), or to set up further sub-groups as deemed necessary to fulfil the aims and objectives of the AONB Management Plan.
- 12) Members of the Advisory Group and of any sub-group will be expected to abide by the City and County of Swansea Members Code of Conduct.

MEETINGS

- 13) An officer from Swansea Council Democratic Services will be present at all meetings to record proceedings. Minutes of each meeting shall be kept and circulated to Advisory Group members, and made available to the public, as soon as possible after each meeting.
- 14) **The Advisory Group:** will meet quarterly, and the meeting dates published annually. Additional meetings will be convened if required. In the absence of the Chair or Vice-Chair at a meeting, the Advisory Group may elect a Chair for that meeting. The quorum for the Advisory Group meetings will be six.
- 15) All meetings of the Advisory Group will be open to the public for observation.
- 16) Decisions by the Advisory Group shall be made by show of hands with the Chairman having the casting vote.
- 17) **The SDF Grants Panel:** will be called to meet by the Grants Panel members and advised by the AONB Team and NRW representative, determined by the timing and number of applications to received. Quorum of the SDF Grants Panel will be four.
- 18) **The SDF Appeals Panel:** will be called to meet by the Grants Panel and advised by the AONB Team and NRW representative, determined by the timing of appeals received. Quorum of the SDF Appeals Panel will be four.
- 19) Further information in relation to the election of Advisory Group members and other procedural matters can be found in the Gower AONB Partnership Procedural/ Guidance notes available from the AONB Team.

THE AONB PARTNERSHIP

- 20) **The Gower AONB Partnership** will be a membership body, open to any individual, group or organisation that has an interest in the AONB and will be chaired by the Councillor who is Chair of the Planning Committee.
- 21) The role of the partnership is to:
 - protect, conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Gower AONB (“the primary purpose”),
 - promote the sustainable social and economic development of the area, where it is consistent with the primary purpose of the AONB,
 - encourage the enjoyment and understanding of the area, where it is consistent with the primary purpose of the AONB.