



Report of the Natural Environment Manager

Gower AONB Advisory Group – 26 June 2023

Gower AONB Team Report

Gower AONB team members will provide verbal reports on the following:

- 1) **Gower Show** – Gower AONB Partnership will have a marquee as usual, hosting a number of partners.
- 2) **Gower Dark Sky Community Application** – a draft application for “Dark Sky Community” status was submitted in January, and we are awaiting a response from the International Dark Sky committee. The application has been acknowledged, and a newly appointed project officer has been in touch.
- 3) **Gower Dark Sky – Retro Fit Projects** – Ty Rhossili has been surveyed and lighting upgraded to meet the requirements of the building’s use as well as adhering to dark sky standards. The Wales-wide collaborative project is underway with lighting consultants Ridge having surveyed Gower AONB and a report with recommendations for lighting improvements and estimated costings will be provided in the coming months.
- 4) **Port Eynon Bay Dunes** – work is being planned for September. No comments have been received from the Community Councils.
- 5) **Fairwood Common** – Work to install a new water connection at Moor lakes was completed in March 2023, providing drinking water for stock grazing the Common. Dormouse surveys are being undertaken to ascertain their presence in suitable habitat on the Common.
- 6) **Pennard Castle** – Interpretation panels were installed in 2022 & 2023. Stage 1 of the ivy removal works are underway – rare plant seed has been collected and grown on at Celtic Wildflower Nurseries, and a Scheduled Monument Consent application has been made. A contractor is lined up to undertake investigative works so that a tender document for Stage 2 of the works (ivy removal & some restoration work) can be drawn up for bidding contractors.
- 7) **Gower Places of Worship** – Initial surveys of twelve churches completed in 2022. Have made a start on implementation of some recommendations – new tower doors at Oxwich and Llanrhidian to allow continued access by roosting bats. Specialist surveys for bats and swift boxes are underway for several churches.

8) Clyne Valley Country Park – Following a site visit with Corporate Building Services, stabilisation work will start this autumn on the Ivy Tower. Work is also being planned on the main buildings of the Clyne Woods Arsenic Works, following an environmental survey. A planning application has been submitted for replacement signage at Blackpill. Work to make the buildings at New Mill Farm safe is underway.

Biodiversity interpretation and a nature trail installed 2022. A second round of Japanese knotweed treatment scheduled for autumn 2023. Working with NRW on a survey of Clyne River to determine what restoration and flood mitigation measures can be implemented with the help of CVCP.

9) Parkmill Japanese Knotweed – A third year of treatment is scheduled for autumn 2023. A survey in spring 2024 will determine the need for any further treatment.

10) SDF Panel – dates of the grant panel have been confirmed for 2023/24 (30th June, 22nd September, 8th December, 15th March 2024).

11) AONB Advisory Group – dates for the Advisory Group have been confirmed for 2023/24 (26th June, 25th September, 26th February 2024).

12) NAAONB Rebrand – the National Association of AONBs is discussing a significant rebrand to address some of the issues raised in the Marsden Report – mainly around inclusion and working with under-represented communities, better communications, providing a more unified image, seeking to achieve a higher profile, and greater recognition of their contribution to nature recovery and climate change agendas.

13) AONB Team Staffing – an “AONB Nature and Communities Officer” post is being advertised, which will provide a third member of staff within the AONB team, enabling more project work to be carried out. Work on restructuring the Natural Environment Section is continuing.