



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Advisory Group – 26 February 2024

Project Reports and Updates

For Information

Project Update – January 2024

Issue	Update	Lead Contact
Gower AONB Management Plan	Formal review process to be started – 2023/24	MS
Social Media	<p>Social media page: This is Gower: https://www.facebook.com/thisisgower/ On average, minimum of 3 social media posts a week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of upcoming opportunities created by the Gower AONB Team • Posts outlining outcomes of any recent activities and events, any feedback provided by participants, pictures from the event etc. • Sharing other suitable free nature opportunities as advertised on social media <p>The last 28 days had post reach of 12,951 (the number of people who saw any of the posts at least once), 37 new page likes and 74 new followers. Post reach within the last 90 days is 21.7K.</p> <p>The latest post (15th February) following up on the hedgerow workshop (10-11th February) had 1,412 impressions. Video post (14th February) about free rocket workshop organised the Gower AONB, held at Swansea Museum by AstroCymru to celebrate Welsh Dark Skies Week reached over 1.7k plays.</p>	EG
Hedgerow Projects	Hedgerow workshops delivered by Mr Malcolm Edwards (award-winning hedge layer with over 25 years of experience) and 2 staff members of the Gower AONB.	EG, KT

	<p>First day: introduction to hedge laying, including different regional styles, plants found in hedges as well as pleach, plesh and plash cuts and safe use of tools and maintenance. Followed by laying the hedge.</p> <p>Second day: recap and carry on with hedge laying, finessing the techniques.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autumn 2023 – 1, 2-day hedgerow workshop attended by 12 members of the public from across Swansea/Gower. The workshop was supported by the West Glamorgan Guide Centre (Parkmill), kindly providing indoor facilities to attendees. • January- end of February 2024 – total of 5, 2-day workshops (10 days in total) – ongoing. This round of workshops is expected to end on 29th February 2024. <p>Total expected attendance across 10 days – over 60 participants with 16 individuals on the waiting list. The workshop is supported by The Upper Killay Community Council, kindly providing indoor facilities (community centre) to attendees. The hedge is situated along the Gower Road (A4118) outside Upper Killay Community Centre.</p>	
Gower Dark Skies Community Status	<p>Draft application submitted to IDA for comment – comments received, showing further work needed (mostly around planning processes and examples of good practice as well as arranging more community engagement events?).</p> <p>Dark sky monitoring at 48 locations across and adjacent to Gower was undertaken on 9th and 10th January 2024, with excellent results.</p> <p>We have a week of free activities and events planned for Welsh Dark Sky week to raise the profile of this work.</p>	MS
Dark Skies – retro-fit projects	<p>Work on all-Wales project is progressing – Ridge Consultants have provided advice on 33 Gower sites, and detailed lighting retrofit specifications for three sites on Gower.</p> <p>‘Before’ retrofitting monitoring of bat activity has been undertaken on three of the sites. An ‘after’ snapshot will be undertaken in April/May.</p>	UJ

	The remaining 30 sites will be formed into a list of priority and engagement will be undertaken with landowners/occupiers to address lighting improvements.	
Port Eynon Dunes	Community Councils have been advised of the forthcoming works along the dune front, to remove the partially buried wire and posts. Suitable contractor to be taken on during the spring.	MS
St Marys Church, Knelston	Scheduled Monument Consent is being sought to carry out stabilisation works.	MS
Backingstone Chapel	On 15-16 January the scrub was carefully removed by contractors. Next steps are for Cadw to assess the stability of the structure and mortar holding it together, check for surviving agricultural features and update the management plan.	JC
Parking Issues	Residents at Pennard have raised issue of parking on Pennard Common. Discussions with residents, golf club and commoners. Parking at Cwm Ivy is causing problems – working with residents to find solutions.	MS
Pennard Castle	Trial works on two areas of the western curtain wall have been completed. The results have been used to generate a specification for a tender document to undertake the full ivy removal works, reporting and rare plant reintroduction. Tender is live on Sell2Wales. A contractor will be appointed by mid-February and works will commence in March.	UJ
Gower Nature Recovery Programme	Continuation of Japanese Knotweed survey and clearance works planned for Ilston and Clyne valleys. A dormouse survey has been completed on Fairwood Common, no presence was confirmed. A meeting is due with Fairwood Commoners and NRW to discuss purchase of GPS cattle collars, and some scrub clearance to aid grazing. Several hedge-laying workshops are being run (Parkmill, Upper Killay and Bishopston), with SLSP funding. Dark Skies retrofit will begin to address lighting improvements at 22 sites on Gower as per the report from Ridge – this will include engagement with landowners/occupiers, detailed survey of lighting retrofit and installation.	UJ MS JC

	Four free-to-attend Welsh Dark Skies Week events have been organised for half-term week in February.	
Gower Places of Worship	Bat doors installed in two church towers. Fourteen swift boxes installed at one church, and boxes will be installed in at least two more churches. Loft hatch and ladders replaced to aid access for inspections and keep bats from becoming trapped inside the church and perishing. Site-specific management plans have been produced for nine churches. Bat survey data has enabled a detailed mitigation strategy for Llanrhidian church to be produced. Have been approached by three new churches to make improvements - bird boxes and hedgerow creation. Will be engaging with the newly formed Gower Ministerial Area Ecology Committee at their first meeting Jan 2024.	UJ
Clyne Valley Country Park	Signage installed at Blackpill and Killay Station – similar signage is planned at Dunvant. Heritage interpretation will be installed throughout the Park Feb/March. Consultation of the initial stages of the draft management plan has been completed. The full document is being produced and will undergo internal consultation later this year, followed by stakeholder consultation towards the end of the year. Work to make the buildings at New Mill Farm safe is now complete, with a hard standing surface in front of the barn. This will provide an informal venue for events in the future, and we plan to install a picnic bench and interpretation. Contractors are being invited to bid for the official mountain bike trail refurbishment works; works are likely to be undertaken April 2024 – March 2025. CVCP are continuing with their work in the Valley, including permissive path maintenance, creation of areas to relax (Brickworks) and guided walks.	UJ
Grant Funding	Grant claims are being drafted for 2023/24, for NRW and WG. NRW grant funding (2024-27) has been applied for, with an offer expected in February, and WG funding in place until 2024/25.	MS