



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group

At: Remotely via Microsoft Teams

On: Monday, 30 November 2020

Time: 2.00 pm

Chair: Councillor Paul Lloyd

Membership:

Councillors: M C Child, J P Curtice, P R Hood-Williams, L James and A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: R Button, J Chambers, J France, S Heard, S Hill, G Howe, P Jenkins, H Osborn, B Parry, P Thornton and D P Tucker

Watch Online: <https://bit.ly/3pHrNGm>

Agenda

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2 Apologies for Absence.	
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Next Meeting: Monday, 15 March 2021 at 2.00 pm

Huw Evans

**Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Monday, 23 November 2020**

Contact: Democratic Services: - 636923

Agenda Item 4



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 21 September 2020 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

Councillors

M C Child

J P Curtice

P R Hood-Williams

L James

Steering Group Members

R Button

J France

S Heard

S Hill

G Howe

P Jenkins

B Parry

P Thornton

Officer(s)

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

Mike Scott

Gower AONB Officer

Jeremy Parkhouse

Democratic Services Officer

Rachel Willis

Principal Planner, Planning Policy and Environment

Apologies for Absence

Councillors: A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: J Chambers, H Osborn and D P Tucker

49 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

50 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Gower AONB Partnership Annual Meeting held on 29 June 2020 be approved as a correct record.

51 Natural Resources Wales Grant Funding.

Mike Scott, Gower AONB Officer reported that the Annual Report to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) for its grant support for Gower AONB was submitted on 4 September 2020, as part of the annual reporting process. A copy of the report had been distributed to the Steering Group members.

It was added that the grant was provided under the Gower AONB Partnership Programme 2018-21, which offered 75% funding (up to £216,671) over three years. Its aim was to support the implementation of the Gower AONB Management Plan.

In 2019/20, the grant paid by NRW totalled £72,223, with the project delivery split between the AONB, Rights of Way, Nature Conservation and Planning Policy Teams.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

52 Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance Consultation.

The Gower AONB Officer reported that as part of its work to develop up-to-date Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), Swansea Council was carrying out a consultation and engagement exercise relating to the following Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance documents:

- Revised Gower AONB Design Guide
- Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands on Development Sites
- Development and Biodiversity

The documents provided guidance as to how the relevant policies of the Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP) should be applied in order to assist in the determination of planning applications submitted to the Authority in future.

The Council wanted the public's views on whether the draft SPG documents covered an appropriate range of planning issues and if it provided sufficient clarity for decision makers, applicants and all other interested parties.

The consultation was now live and would run until 5pm on Friday, 16 October 2020.

It was added that three short presentations outlining the draft SPG's would be given by Strategic Planning staff on 23 September 2020 and Steering Group members would be sent a link in order to take part.

Ruth Henderson, Senior Planning Officer also attended the meeting and presented the Draft Supplementary Guidance documents to the Steering Group and answered questions raised.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

53 Port Eynon and Horton - Update.

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader provided an update report on the Port Eynon and Horton feasibility study.

He provided the background to the work that had already been undertaken and the key issues and opportunities for development work were presented at Figure 1 to the report.

It was added that going forward, the Gower AONB Partnership and Swansea Council were developing the report recommendations. The Sustainable Development Fund Panel had awarded a grant that enabled Swansea Council to commission the design of a scheme of detailed, costed improvements to visitor facilities and public realm infrastructure in the short term. The commission would also develop the medium-term capital investment recommendation for a new beach / community centre building.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- Sources of capital / grant funding available to undertake the works;
- The timetable of the preliminary study;
- Overall timescale for the completion of the whole project which was hoped would be completed in 5 years;
- How the project details would be clearer in March 2021;
- Dealing with the signage and boardwalk issues in the short term;
- Ensuring that the function of any new build is established because will drive the eventual design;
- A building at this sensitive location will need to be of sensitive design and high quality.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

54 Sustainable Development Fund - Financial Summary.

The Gower AONB Officer presented the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Panel Financial Summary report.

It was outlined that the Welsh Government had confirmed the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) budget for 2020/21 as £100,000.

There were currently 12 projects approved with SDF funding for 2020/21, with 1 application currently being assessed and 3 further applications anticipated shortly.

Further projects would be brought forward during 2020/21, to fully commit the funds. The Committed Funds figure included the CCS Management Fee of £10,000 (10%).

Total Funds available	£ 100,000
Committed Funds	£ 74,420
Uncommitted Funds	£ 25,580
Applications under consideration	£ 3,000

The budget for 2021/22 had not been confirmed, but was anticipated to be £55,000. Two projects had been approved, with £25,500 committed and currently £29,500 uncommitted.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

55 Gower Society Issues.

Due to the Gower Society Representative losing connection with the meeting, it was agreed that the item be deferred to the next scheduled meeting.

Resolved that the item be deferred to the next scheduled meeting.

56 Clyne Valley Country Park.

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided a verbal update report on progress made in respect of Clyne Valley Country Park.

He outlined that the Authority had been awarded Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places grant money, from Welsh Government, for the regeneration of the Country Park. He added that he and the Gower AONB Officer had met with Cadw, discussing restoration, stabilisation, improvements to Ivy Tower, Killay Station and access improvements. Some funding opportunities would also be available from Cadw.

Furthermore, the AONB Team had been assigned the co-ordination of Council activities within the Country Park going forward.

Resolved that a report be provided to the next scheduled meeting.

57 Parking on Cefn Bryn.

The Gower AONB Team Leader provided a verbal progress update report. He stated that the project, which had been awarded Welsh Government Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places grant funding, could be completed during the current financial year, subject to agreement.

He added that the next stage would be to outline the proposals with Highways and the Gower Commoners in order to agree an improved design solution.

Resolved that an update report be provided at the next scheduled meeting.

58 Traffic Speed on Gower.

The Vice Chair requested an update be provided regarding speeding traffic on Gower.

Resolved that a report be provided to the next scheduled meeting.

59 Meeting of National Park's and AONB's.

The Gower AONB Team Leader stated that he had been invited to a meeting of all National Park's and AONB's by the Welsh Government Minister at the end of September 2020. The meeting would discuss what has happened during the

pandemic, the impact upon communities, the lessons learnt and sustainable solutions.

The meeting ended at 2.58 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 5



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 30 November 2020

Clyne Valley Country Park Update

Following on from the last meeting that introduced the Country Park, issues affecting its management (both in the current COVID-19 context and into the long term) there has been a number of initiatives and work within the area, including:

- Construction of Shared Use Paths (SUP) using existing bridleways through the Country Park – funded by an Active Travel grant.
- Conservation works to the Ivy Tower – part of Clyne Arsenic Works Scheduled Monument
- Work with Clyne Valley Community Project and Swansea Council's Countryside Access Team to progress wider access improvements, interpretation and other heritage conservation
- An assessment of damage to the Clyne Valley Shaft Mounds Scheduled Monument from unauthorised construction and use of mountain bike tracks
- Proposals from other parties for the development of an 'Urban Bike Park'

The AONB Team will provide a full update on these and other matters affecting the Country Park at the meeting.

Chris Lindley
Gower AONB Team Leader
24 November 2020



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 30 November 2020

Port Eynon Report

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group should note that the following briefing was sent to the relevant Community Councils, Councillor Richard Lewis and other community contacts on Friday 20 November. The briefing provides an update on project work at Port Eynon.

Chris Lindley Gower AONB Team Leader

PORT EYNON BRIEFING NOTE

Following a Feasibility Study for Port Eynon and Horton in 2018, Swansea Council has considered the issues that the report describes and the subsequent recommendations. In summary, the study found that Port Eynon appears neglected and under-resourced and continues to deteriorate, with the village coming under considerable visitor pressure during the height of the season. Locally, the study found that there is some appetite for a proposed new centre that could solve many of the main issues identified at Port Eynon, notably those relating to the management of the car park, the condition of the toilets, and boat launching procedures on the slipway. A number of connected issues and recommendations are also identified for the village of Horton.

Swansea Council is following up on the study's recommendations, and is considering a range of improvements that are likely to focus on the following areas:

- Car parks – improvements to layout, pay stations and public realm
- Improvements to the Port Eynon seafront road layout and disabled parking/ drop-off point
- Port Eynon beachfront landscaping
- Improved disabled access to Port Eynon beach
- Rationalising RNLI lifeguard facilities on Port Eynon beach
- Interim improvements to toilets & changing facilities
- Electronic /Smart controls for boat launching/slipway access
- Rationalisation of public information and instruction signage
- Clearer demarcation of dog- friendly/-free zones and facilities
- Improving pedestrian access to - and interpretation of - the beach, dunes, Wales Coast Path, villages, built heritage and biodiversity features (e.g. Port Eynon Salthouse)

As a key part of this work, Swansea Council has appointed architects - 'Rural Office for Architecture Ltd' - to develop a Concept Design for a new beach/community centre building in Port Eynon. The commission is supported by a Sustainable Development Fund grant from the Gower AONB Partnership.

Starting next week (from Monday 23 November), there will be people undertaking preliminary survey and assessment work in and around the car park in Port Eynon; the information collected will be used in the design development.

Community engagement and consultation is key to a successful design outcome, and we want to keep stakeholders and the community informed and interested in the proposals. Given the Covid-19 restrictions, we will be using some on-line consultation methods; however, we are also keen to use site visits or small group gatherings to discuss the project and present proposals at key stages. We are planning to start these in early December, and we will be back in touch nearer the time with further details of how these will work.

For further information or queries, please contact:

cultural.services@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Gower Society Representative

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 30 November 2020

Gower Society Issues

The Gower Society would appreciate discussion and comment from Members on the following matters: -

1) The Case for an Article 4 Direction for The Vile, Rhossili

In this exceptional and difficult year activities on Gower have been chaotic to say the least. The setting up of a temporary catering unit, without any planning application required in the centre of the historical area, known as The Vile, was legal under the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 - Part 4 - Temporary Buildings and Uses - Class B* for a total of 28 days in the calendar year. The Gower Society and Rhossili Community Council were greatly concerned that there would be complications and damage to the landscape. No one appreciated that anyone wishing to exercise their rights (with permission from the land owner) could proceed with impunity in such a location in the AONB. As there are a number of land owners in The Vile it is not unforeseeable that there could be various enterprises dotted around the Vile for a full summer in different locations every 28 days. Not only this, but the scale of the facilities could be considerably larger than deployed by Mr Morgan in 2020. For as long as it does not exceed a total of 28 days and is temporary, the type, size, colour and capacity of any structure or use without planning permission is lawful.

The concept and prospect of more conspicuous retail sales (within an area of the AONB) that is designated as being of the highest landscape value in Wales is unthinkable. Indeed the present 2020 arrangement was described as *'being akin to allowing a burger van to establish itself in the centre of Stonehenge'* by a local resident. It is unacceptable but regrettably not preventable, under current rules. The Vile Field System in Rhossili is a Registered Historical Landscape of Outstanding Importance in Wales. It is not only the visual impact but the numbers of visitors drawn to the location by the wide use of social media and the associated fields planted with sunflowers to attract them. created a theme park type attraction that is at odds with the natural landscape. It also caused a number of nuisances in the village adversely impacting on the residents.

The Gower Society maintains that such entrepreneurial development enterprises should stop at the village boundary. A current planning application, to retain for a further 3 years the sales outlet in the National Trust Car Park, is being considered and will be judged and determined by the strict planning regulations.

The Gower Society is actively investigating (with others) the possibility of obtaining an Article 4 Direction to prevent such inappropriate future development. A direction removes such permitted rights but does not deny a developer the right to apply for planning permission in the usual way. Also to establish greater protection that recognises the importance of the area or an extension to the Rhossili Conservation Area to include The Vile. (However, extending the Conservation Area will not suspend or curtail Permitted Development rights; only an Article 4 Direction can do that.) Such an Article 4 Direction was made to prevent 28 day camping in 1979 which had got out of hand in the 1970's and which made a dramatic improvement to the AONB during summer months.

Article 4 protection was also proposed for The Vile in 1987 because it was considered in The Gower Management Plan Consultation Draft although the final Gower Management Plan relied upon an Agreement under Section 39 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to protect the ancient field boundaries being damaged.

As a Society we have seen a number of threats to the Gower landscape over the decades and we have deployed our energies and influence to protect or safeguard it. We have had considerable input to the many documents that are produced and published under the AONB Steering Group and the previous Gower Forum before it. Members recognise that strong actions are often needed and that the current legislation should be strictly enforced where necessary. Delays will only accentuate the position.

Finally we point out that many hundreds of thousands of pounds has been spent to enhance and preserve the landscape and environment over the last 30 years in Rhossili. By the CCS, the NT and others, including the Gower Society. This should not be wasted by allowing such development within the AONB.

Appendix A – Photograph of The Vile.

2) Protection of Trees within the Gower AONB

The Gower Society spent considerable time preparing contributions to the Consultation process for the proposed Supplementary Planning Guidance. The Design Guide, Tree, Hedgerows and Woodlands on Development Sites and development and Biodiversity Consultation Drafts. In general all excellent documents. However at a previous meeting we have drawn to the attention of this Steering Committee the apparent lack of protection to trees within the compass of the AONB and its fringes. There are very few protected woodlands and importantly the random spread of mature trees around the countryside. Within SSSI's and National Nature Reserves protection is afforded although there are very few trees actually given protected by specific Tree Preservation Orders.

The regulations that we have in place are administered by the CCS and NRW and their powers have been proven to be inadequate to prevent random destruction in at least 4 sites over the last 2 years within the AONB. Mature trees have been felled and great damage done in the process to the environment. Both regulatory bodies have been unable to act quickly enough to prevent it. In one case the land owner

carried on clear felling oak woodland on about 25 acres for many months after he was told to stop. The damage was done by the time full legal action was taken. Other infringements have proceeded on a lesser scale but are just as serious.

In our response to the above Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands on Development Sites Consultation Draft (September 2020) we have pointed out the lack of protection that this gives to the AONB itself. Not just by Developers but by anyone (with a chain saw and a wood burning stove) who has a personal reason to do so. Thousands of trees with Ash Die Back have to be removed legally on Gower in any case and the impact of their loss will soon be all too obvious. All the more important to save and protect the trees that we have left. Felling a 50 year old tree with another 200 years of potential carbon absorption without permission should be an offence but those trees require identification and protection. We are planting only a smattering of new trees that do not start absorbing carbon in any realistic quantity within our lifetime.

The Gower Society has suggested that a complete survey of all trees should be made and suitable protection given wherever appropriate. More trees must also be planted in order to compensate for the losses of ash and help to slow Global Warming. This requires a National effort that we should encourage and support.

Appendix B – Photograph – March 2015

Appendix C – Photograph – September 2020

Gordon Howe
Gower Society Representative







Agenda Item 8



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 30 November 2020

Cefn Bryn Update

Following the verbal update on the parking issues at Cefn Bryn at the last meeting (21 September), Vice Chair (Steve Heard) and Gower AONB Team Leader (Chris Lindley) had an online meeting (8 October) with Alan Ferris (Swansea Council Highways) and Bob Griffiths (Cefn Bryn Commoners).

The outcome of that meeting was an agreed revised scheme that:

- extends the proposed highway bunding eastward from the parking area – from 50m to 200m;
- includes a small and discrete repair to bunding on the south side of the highway, to deter vehicle access onto that part of the common.

Grant funding for the proposals has now been confirmed.

Highways are working on the revised costs to the project and specifications. The works are expected to be programmed and implemented before the end of March 2021.

Gower AONB Team is writing to the landowner for their comment on the proposals. As Cefn Bryn is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Gower AONB team will also approach Natural Resources Wales for a Notice of Assent under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

A further update will be provided at the next AONB Steering Group meeting.

Gower AONB Team Leader

23 November

Agenda Item 9



Report of the Natural Environment Section Manager

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 30 November 2020

Update on Revised Gower AONB Design Guide (Consultation Draft)

This document provides supplementary planning guidance (SPG) in support of planning policies contained in the Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP). Its purpose is to provide guidance as to how relevant policies of the LDP should be applied in order to assist in the determination of planning applications within the AONB.

The first Design Guide was adopted as SPG to the now superseded City and County of Swansea Unitary Development Plan (2008). The revised Guide takes account of the most recent changes to the legislative and strategic planning context that have arisen at both national and local level. This includes the latest Gower Management Plan (2017) and amended versions of Planning Policy Wales and supporting Technical Advice Notes produced by the Welsh Government.

Public consultation was undertaken by Swansea Council through Sept-Oct 2020 seeking views on whether the document covered an appropriate range of planning issues and provided sufficient clarity for applicants and decision makers on the important principles governing development in Gower.

The majority of the comments received were positive, with only relatively minor changes suggested in order to improve clarity. In particular, the use of more appropriate photographs and imagery and has been suggested and these are being sought for the final version of the document.

As no significant amendments have been identified from the comments received that necessitate redrafting and re-consultation it is proposed to report a revised version of the document to Planning Committee early in the New Year for adoption.

Paul Meller
24.11.20

Agenda Item 10



Report of John France

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 30 November 2020

Cycle Access in Gower

Members will remember that there is a proposal to create a cycle network across the Gower. They will also remember that while nobody directly opposed this idea there were considerable reservations about its implementation. These reservations can only be increased by recent events concerning cycleways in parts of West Swansea adjacent to Gower, and the actions of the Council with regard to them.

- a. **Mayals Road:** Two weeks ago the Traffic Engineers held a Zoom meeting to explain a scheme for a cycle track up Mayals (which is a gateway to Gower). No plans were made available to the public at any point and the only ones later obtained were very poor with no real description of the scheme. WHEELWRIGHTS is a lobbying body for cycling, was given privileged access at the meeting by being associated with the Council and allowed to address the meeting. The general public were allowed to ask questions and make points but the Engineer stated that this was a roads and not planning matter. The inference was that the attitude of the public mattered not at all. It appears that that the scheme needed to be in by March to qualify for government support. For there to be any chance of this being done the contracts must surely have been let out by now.
- b. **Clyne Woods:** Part of this zone is, I believe in the Gower AONB. New cycle ways are being proposed for this area and local people says they have not been asked about it. I am the recipient of a great deal of indignation, especially because established pathways are being closed and plans apparently made for tarmacked riding routes cutting across established walking routes. What all the people I have spoken to remark on is the remote attitude of the council and the lack of real consultation with anyone. I belong to Swansea Ramblers who have a strong interest in such matters – we are a lobby group like Wheelwrights -and the Council has not advised us of this scheme.

All or any of these schemes may have virtues. But giving special access to lobbyists has none at all. It would be unfortunate, to say the least, if these tactics of steamrolling through schemes without consultation are going to be applied more widely in Gower. This is why I am raising the matter here.

Agenda Item 11



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 30 November 2020

Sustainable Development Fund – Financial Summary

Grant Scheme 2020/21

Welsh Government have confirmed the SDF budget for 2020/21 as £100,000.

There are currently 12 projects approved with SDF funding for 2020/21, and 3 further applications anticipated shortly.

Further projects will be brought forward during 2020/21, to fully commit the funds.

The Committed Funds figure includes the CCS Management Fee of £10,000 (10%).

Total Funds available	£ 100,000
Committed Funds	£ 80,065
Uncommitted Funds	£ 19,935
Applications in progress	£ 11,000

Grant Scheme 2021/22

The budget for 2021/22 has not been confirmed, but is anticipated to be £55,000.

Four projects have been approved, with £25,650 committed, and currently £29,350 uncommitted.

Mike Scott,
19th November 2020