



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, 4 October 2021

Time: 2.00 pm

Chair: Councillor Paul Lloyd

Membership:

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

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

Watch Online: <https://bit.ly/3lzMi6Q>

Agenda

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(Chris Lindley)

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Next Meeting: Monday, 6 December 2021 at 2.00 pm

Huw Evans

Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Monday, 27 September 2021

Contact: Democratic Services: - 636923

Agenda Item 3



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 5 July 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Lloyd (Chair) Presided

Councillors

M C Child

P R Hood-Williams

L James

M Thomas

Steering Group Members

S Heard

G Howe

B Parry

P Thornton

Officer(s)

Paul Meller

Natural Environment Section Manager

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

Mike Scott

Gower AONB Officer

Jeremy Parkhouse

Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillors: A H Stevens

Steering Group Members: R Button, J Chambers, J France and D P Tucker

1 Election of Vice-Chair for the 2021-2022 Municipal Year.

Resolved that Councillor L James be elected Vice-Chair for the 2021-2022 Municipal year.

2 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interests were declared: -

Councillors P R Hood-Williams, P Lloyd and M Thomas declared personal interests in Minute No.8 - Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places - Award of Grant and Identified Projects.

3 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting held on 15 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4 Sustainable Development Fund - Financial Summary. (Mike Scott)

Mike Scott, Gower AONB Officer presented the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) Panel Financial Summary report 'for information'.

It was highlighted that Welsh Government had confirmed the SDF budget for 2021/22 at £100,000. 14 projects had been approved so far, with £88,000 committed, and one further application currently under consideration for £12,000.

The Committed Funds figure included the CCS Management Fee of £7,500.55.

Total Funds available	£100,000
Committed Funds	£88,000
Uncommitted Funds	£12,000
Applications in progress	£12,000

It was added that an application was approved at the Grants Panel meeting on 28 June 2021, which fully committed the SDF grant scheme budget for 2021/22.

5 Sustainable Development Fund - Proposed Amendments to Terms of Reference. (Mike Scott)

The Gower AONB Officer presented a report which outlined that following discussions with Welsh Government, the Authority was considering some changes to the Terms Of Reference governing the SDF Grants Panel.

These changes were aimed at ensuring that the membership of the panel was diverse and well placed to implement the Sustainable Grant Scheme locally.

The Welsh Government - Key Recommendations for SDF Panels were provided as follows: -

- 1) The SDF Panel should consist of a diverse demographic of members, with representation from the AONB's Partnership where required.
- 2) Any pre-existing membership arrangements; where for example an SDF panel member is also required to sit on an AONB Partnership panel, should not be dissolved. *This requirement can over-rule point 3 covering maximum term if necessary.*
- 3) Panel members should serve for a minimum of 2 years and for no longer than 3 years, with any new panel members shadowing the exiting member for 1 year.
- 4) Panel appointment should be through a rolling programme carried out by the AONB staff with no more than one third of the panel being replaced in any one year.
- 5) Panel members are required to undertake basic training to keep themselves abreast of the aims and purposes of the SDF and the AONB.

It was added that the Gower AONB Steering Group would remain central to the governance of the AONB Partnership, which appointed to the SDF Grants and the SDF Appeals Panels.

The proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference would be reported to the next scheduled Steering Group meeting, prior to be presented for approval to the Constitution Working Group and Council.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

6 Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places - Award of Grant and Identified Projects. (Chris Lindley)

Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report which advised that further to discussions at the Steering Group meeting in March 2021, the Gower AONB Team had developed project proposals with partners for consideration / approval of Welsh Government and the National Designated Landscapes Partnership (NDLP).

Appendix 1 provided the report to Swansea Council Cabinet on 17 June 2021 which outlined further details on the grant and the proposed projects.

The Steering Group highlighted the following: -

- Proposals outlined for Fairwood Common, particularly future management, the development of scrub as a result of under grazing, encouraging those with grazing rights to use it and put stock onto the Common;
- Working in partnership with Gower Commoners to improve the situation;
- The potential introduction of fenceless systems / livestock collars to control movement;
- Improvement of public access onto Fairwood Common;
- The development of a secure area on Swansea Council owned land just off Fairwood Common to prepare livestock prior to them being released onto the Common;
- Concern as to whether the funding for Pennard Castle would be used to improve the access to the beach.

Resolved that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) The Gower AONB Team Leader discusses the access to the beach at Pennard Castle with Pennard Golf Club.

7 Gower Society - Woodland Project Proposal. (Gordon Howe)

Gordon Howe, Gower Society presented a report which sought the views of the Steering Group on a woodland project proposal.

It was outlined that the Gower Society would be celebrating the 75th Year since its first, and formation meeting, in 2023. The Founder Meeting was held in the Royal Institution in January 1948.

The Society were minded to consider a project in partnership with others that would produce a lasting and indelible positive impact upon the AONB. One project for

consideration included the planting of a significant area of mixed woodland either on land that is designated or purchased specifically for the purpose. A scheme, such as a new woodland, would encourage wildlife, replace trees lost through disease in the AONB, link up with other woodlands, reserves as well as being educational and accessible for all by cycle and public transport.

The Society would like to attract, with others, considerable sums of money from Government and private sources that would make this a truly worthwhile and a National Welsh project.

The Steering Group were very supportive of the proposal and the Gower AONB Team Leader referred to the Welsh Government initiative to introduce a National Forest for Wales which would not be specific to one area of land.

The Gower AONB Officer added that Swansea Council Nature Conservation Team would be happy to assist with the proposal. Paul Thornton, Wildlife Trust added that his organisation were also supported the proposal.

Resolved that: -

- 1) The Steering Group supports the proposal for a woodland project;
- 2) The Gower AONB Team Leader facilitates further discussions and obtains further information regarding the National Forest for Wales initiative.

8 Roadside Verge Management. (Chris Lindley / Highways)

The Gower AONB Team Leader presented a report regarding Roadside Verge Management.

It was highlighted that Steering Group members had previously raised the matter of highway verge management within the AONB and had asked for this to be discussed at a Steering Group meeting.

Appendix 1 provided a paper considered by the Swansea Council Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Policy Development Committee on 22 April 2021 considering these matters.

He also made reference to a report provided by Philip Sterling, Dorset County Council regarding the positive impact of changing cutting regimes.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- The positive impact of more plants and flowers while not affecting access / safety issues on the highway;
- Introducing any change in a measured way including cutting less and removing the arising's to reduce the fertility of the soil and reduce future growth;
- Communicating effectively with the public when introducing change, clearly explaining why change was being introduced and addressing changes community by community;
- How some verges must be cut due to road safety;

- The progress made by the Authority, including grant funding obtained for the purchase of equipment;
- How dealing with the issues community by community was have a positive impact, for example, not cutting the hedges / verges west of Old Walls, which had increased the diversity and had seen the re-emergence of British flowers / plants;
- The overall reduction in wildflower planting by the Authority, recognising their positive impact upon communities and the long term need to introduce alternative methods;
- The complaints received from the public regarding how uncut hedgerows / verges were pushing traffic into the centre of roads / affecting traffic flow;
- How natural solutions can provide psychological traffic calming;
- Recognizing that one size does not fit all and providing a balance.

Resolved that the contents of the report and discussions be noted.

9 Informal Camping / Overnight Parking. (Mike Scott)

The Gower AONB Officer provided a report which highlighted the issues caused by informal camping and overnight parking.

It was outlined that like many parts of the UK, Gower had seen continuing growth in visitor numbers over the past few years which had been increased by the effects of COVID 19 restrictions on overseas travel during 2020 and 2021. Many places on Gower had issues with two particular types – camping and overnight parking by motorhomes or campervans.

It was added that in most cases, it was not so much the presence of those involved, it was usually the associated anti-social behaviour (noise, environmental damage, litter, etc.). Sometimes it occurred because visitors could not find official camping sites, however, more often it was a deliberate choice.

It was further commented that the legal situation was complex, differing between location and type. Frequently used terminology included: -

- Wild Camping – traditionally lightweight, was done in small numbers and only for two or three nights in any one place, usually as part of a walking or cycling trip. Technically, a civil offence rather than a legal one, it had sometimes been tolerated by landowners, usually being discrete and leaving no trace.
- Informal or Freedom Camping – was a widely adopted term for overnight parking or camping on the roadside, either in vehicles or tents. It is legal on the highway but may be a civil offence on private land.
- Dirty Camping - where people committed other offences such as littering, causing environmental damage (e.g. driving on sensitive vegetation or cutting trees for fires) or cause disturbance or nuisance to others. This may be a civil offence, but was more likely to be a criminal one.

The main issue of concerns was how these different situations were dealt with because in respect of civil offences, the responsibility rests with the landowner. The addition of anti-social behaviour would attract the possible involvement of the Police,

but it was often a low priority and frequently took a good deal of time to resolve, usually occurring at weekends or in the evenings.

Previously the AONB Ranger and local Police mounted regular joint patrols to “hot spots”. However, neither organisation had the resources to undertake the work at present. The AONB Team, working with partners, recently dealt with informal camping on Cefn Bryn by limiting vehicle access and the same approach may have to be taken elsewhere. The measures taken to address the issues were rarely simple, quick or cheap and often move the problem to another site, impacting upon other users.

The cumulative effect of informal camping, particularly dirty camping, could be huge on local communities, often experiencing repeated anti-social behaviour and damage / littering. It was often beyond individual landowners capacity to address the issues and was best tackled on a partnership approach.

The Steering Group discussed the following: -

- Social media highlighting sites for camper vans;
- The difficulties in dealing with the issues for landowners and lack of Police involvement unless landowners are threatened;
- The huge demand for these activities and the type of person they attracted, who wanted to avoid paying for overnight accommodation;
- Similar issues encountered, but on a much larger scale, in the Scottish Highlands;
- The issues encountered at Southgate such as litter and human waste due to no toilet facilities being available;
- The lack of respect shown to the countryside by those undertaking such activities / attending mini raves and the lack of Police numbers for enforcement;
- Proposed legislative changes which could potentially criminalize such actions.

Resolved that the contents of the report and discussions be noted.

The meeting ended at 2.52 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 4a



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 4 October 2021

Sustainable Development Fund – Financial Summary

For Information

Welsh Government have confirmed the SDF budget for 2021/22 at £100,000.

15 projects have been approved, with £100,000 committed, fully committing the funds for 2020/21.

The Committed Funds figure includes the CCS Management Fee of £7,500.55.

Total Funds available	£100,000
Committed Funds	£100,000
Uncommitted Funds	£0
Applications in progress	£0

Mike Scott,

24th September 2021



Report of the Gower AONB Officer

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 4 October 2021

Draft Amendments to Process of Appointing to the Sustainable Development Fund Grant Panel

Welsh Government have requested changes to the way the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) grants panels are appointed, which are aimed at ensuring that the panels consist of a diverse demographic of members, with representation from the AONB Partnership. The proposed Terms of Reference Procedural / Guidance Notes are attached at Appendix A.

To accommodate this, I propose to amend the process that we use to appoint members of the SDF Grant Panel, and the SDF Appeals Panel.

Currently, members of the Steering Group nominate 4 members of each panel every two years, for a term of two years. To meet the Welsh Governments guidance, I propose to ask the steering group to appoint two members of each panel each year, for a term of two years.

This will enable us to have a rolling appointment process, keeping the skills built up by the panel membership, while also introducing new members of the panel.

I will also run annual introductions to the work of the SDF grants panel, as part of the established programme of meetings.

Before these amendments are confirmed, I would welcome any comments from the Steering Group.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices: Appendix A – Procedural / Guidance Notes.

Mike Scott,

27th September 2021

Gower AONB Partnership – Procedural / Guidance Notes

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, if requested, when considering how funding should be spent.
- This panel will comprise the Chair of the Development Management & Control Committee (who will act as Chair) and seven other members of the AONB Partnership. The quorum of the SDF Grants Panel will be four members.
- The SDF panel should consist of a diverse demographic of members, with representation from Swansea Council (Councillors), the AONB Partnership (members of the Partnership), and/or co-opted members as required.
- Councillors will be appointed for the term of their election.
- AONB Partnership members (and co-opted members) will be appointed for a minimum term of 2 years, and for no longer than 3 years.
- The AONB Partnership will appoint new members of the panel annually, so that no more than one third of the panel is replaced in any one year.
- The AONB Team will work with the AONB Steering Group to nominate suitable SDF panel members, with appointments confirmed by the AONB Steering Group.
- Panel members are required to undertake basic training to keep themselves abreast of the aims and purposes of the SDF and the Gower AONB.
- The panel will be supported by the AONB Officer, and a representative from NRW, as observers.

24 September 2021

Agenda Item 6

Report of the Gower Society Representative

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 4 October 2021

Gower AONB Tourism Pressures 2021

There are two distinct but closely interrelated issues here: tourist capacity and visitor management.

1) Tourist capacity

We are reliably informed that there may be pressure being exerted upon the CCS and the Senedd to relax the current rules and regulations relating to camping ie tents, yurts and glamping on Gower. This is in fact covered by locally by the Local Development Plan. It is defined in Section TR6, TR7, TR8 and TR9 on , pages 221 to 224 within the LDP that is attached. The Gower Society had considerable input into these policies. The key is going to be consistency and regulation to ensure that the AONB is not damaged as reflected in the LDP Clauses. John Campion has been employed to undertake a further review of the Gower Sensitivity and Landscape Character Study for the Caravan and Campsites.

Permitted development rights were extended by the Government from the original 28 days to 56 days because of the Pandemic to allow more tourism within the UK. Camping on Gower is exempt from this due to the changes brought about by the Article 4 in the 1970's but it has not stopped pop up mobile cafes and additional car parking. However, we do not have any sort of official checking or 'policing' and so called wild camping as well as those living out of vans without any facilities has been rife this summer. I am not certain if additional legal spaces will prevent those who wish to camp on or at the side of the most scenic parts of Gower. We must not allow additional legal sites that intrude into the landscape and we must learn from the past. Use of social media is rampant and one can soon find where to stay without being moved on or be encouraged to mass up on some pop up attraction.

There undoubtedly has been increased pressure on the AONB this year (and to a lesser extent last year) with most existing sites full to capacity and unlawful activities being reported to us but not acted upon. Smaller official sites have been inundated with requests and whilst popular well run sites are always reasonably full the demand this year could have doubled their pitches. There is evidence that larger sites have soaked up much of the demand at the expense of the pleasure of normal customers and residents of Gower alike.

Knee jerk reactions to tourist and political pressure is the likely cause of possible discussions that are taking place behind the scenes with the City & County of Swansea (CCS). We have to accept that there are perhaps well concealed locations that may be suitable for small additional sites. Inappropriate and visually damaging locations must not be permitted and those that may be licensed must be firmly policed. Regrettably the last formal caravan survey by the CCS appears to have been in 2009 and very little checking carried out since then. Equally we ask when was the last traffic survey carried out on Gower to determine increased tourism numbers?

2) Visitor management.

Our AONB is seriously under pressure from increased tourism and those making money out of the Gower brand. How much money is in fact ploughed back into protecting what we have and which is so precious to us all? Gower is rapidly losing its character and in

danger of becoming a glorified theme park. Many of our traditional visitors have commented upon this and like many of our residents are not at all happy with this trend.

And the demographic of visitors has changed: rather than predominantly families, an increasing number of young singles, sometimes in large groups, (initially as a result of Lockdown “exclusion orders”) have now become regulars.

The rush for the great outdoors has also seen a huge increase in rough camping. It is now an offence to remain on land after an owner has asked someone to leave (“aggravated trespass”). In Pembrokeshire National Park wardens and local authority staff in collaboration with the Police have been issuing fines. In Gower, the National Trust wardens say they don’t have the resources to deal with rough camping. And where are the public disposal points in Gower for self-contained vans? The problem is not going to go away; some locations in Gower have been in use every night for the last 6 months (last year too). The word is out; people know it’s not policed. So it’s here to stay.

In their annual remit letter to Pembrokeshire Coast NPA in March 2021, Welsh Government allocated an additional 10% funding specifically for frontline staff, such as wardens to enable them to deliver sustainable tourism. The need for front line staff in Gower is self-evident. We are told that additional funding allocation has not been received (or sought?) by CCS. This should be pursued I suggest.

On the question of resources, National Trust has probably been one of the main beneficiaries of increased visitor numbers from car parking fees, e.g. Rhossili. In the question of sustainability, how much of that income is put back into the AONB? For example, when did it last do an ecological survey/audit of Worms Head and the causeway (including the mussel beds which inhabit it).

Finally, social media is widely blamed for spreading the word. How can it be harnessed to educate and inform those visiting Gower?

Gordon Howe
The Gower Society





Agenda Item 7



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 4 October 2021

National Designated Landscapes Partnership - Autumn Seminar

Tirweddau Cymru - Landscapes Wales is the name of the partnership of designated landscapes in Wales. The partnership is formed of the five AONBs and three National Parks in Wales, along with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

Following a period of review for the Designated Landscapes of Wales, Welsh Government in July 2018 provided a statement (Valued and Resilient) on their priorities for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks. Amongst the priorities was a desire for the family of designated landscapes to champion collaborative approaches to maximise benefits and tackle challenges. The statement committed that a National Landscapes Partnership be established to develop a robust culture of collaboration.

Designated landscapes have a critical role in taking action on climate and nature emergencies. Following the Senedd declaring a nature emergency, designated landscapes are committed to playing their part on delivering on this declaration.

Gower AONB Partnership members are invited to join Tirweddau Cymru - Landscapes Wales online at 10am on 19 October to hear about work going on across designated landscapes in Wales on the themes of:

- Climate change and decarbonisation;
- Nature based solutions and nature recovery;
- Sustainable Tourism; and
- Supporting communities to respond to COVID and promote a green recovery

Booking for the event is essential, and can be accessed from the link below:

[Tirweddau Cymru Landscapes Wales Seminar 2021 Registration, Tue 19 Oct 2021 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader

Agenda Item 8



Report of the Gower AONB Team Leader

Gower AONB Partnership Steering Group – 4 October 2021

UK Government Consultation: Strengthening Enforcement of the Dangerous Use of Recreational and Personal Watercraft

The UK Government is consulting on proposed changes to legislation that would bring recreational and personal watercraft within scope of the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

By this change:

- personal watercraft and other recreational watercraft users will be subject to the same safety obligations, where appropriate, that exist for the operators of ships
- enforcement authorities will have an additional power of prosecution to be used in cases of deliberate or negligent misuse

Maritime safety is the responsibility of the UK Government; if the proposed changes are enacted, they will apply to Wales as a constituent part of the UK.

The full details of the consultation can be accessed through the link below:

[Strengthening enforcement of the dangerous use of recreational and personal watercraft - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-enforcement-of-the-dangerous-use-of-recreational-and-personal-watercraft)

The Gower AONB Partnership is asked to note this consultation in the context of ongoing issues with such watercraft around the AONB. Swansea Council is considering how best to respond to the consultation, which closes 1 November 2021.

Chris Lindley

Gower AONB Team Leader