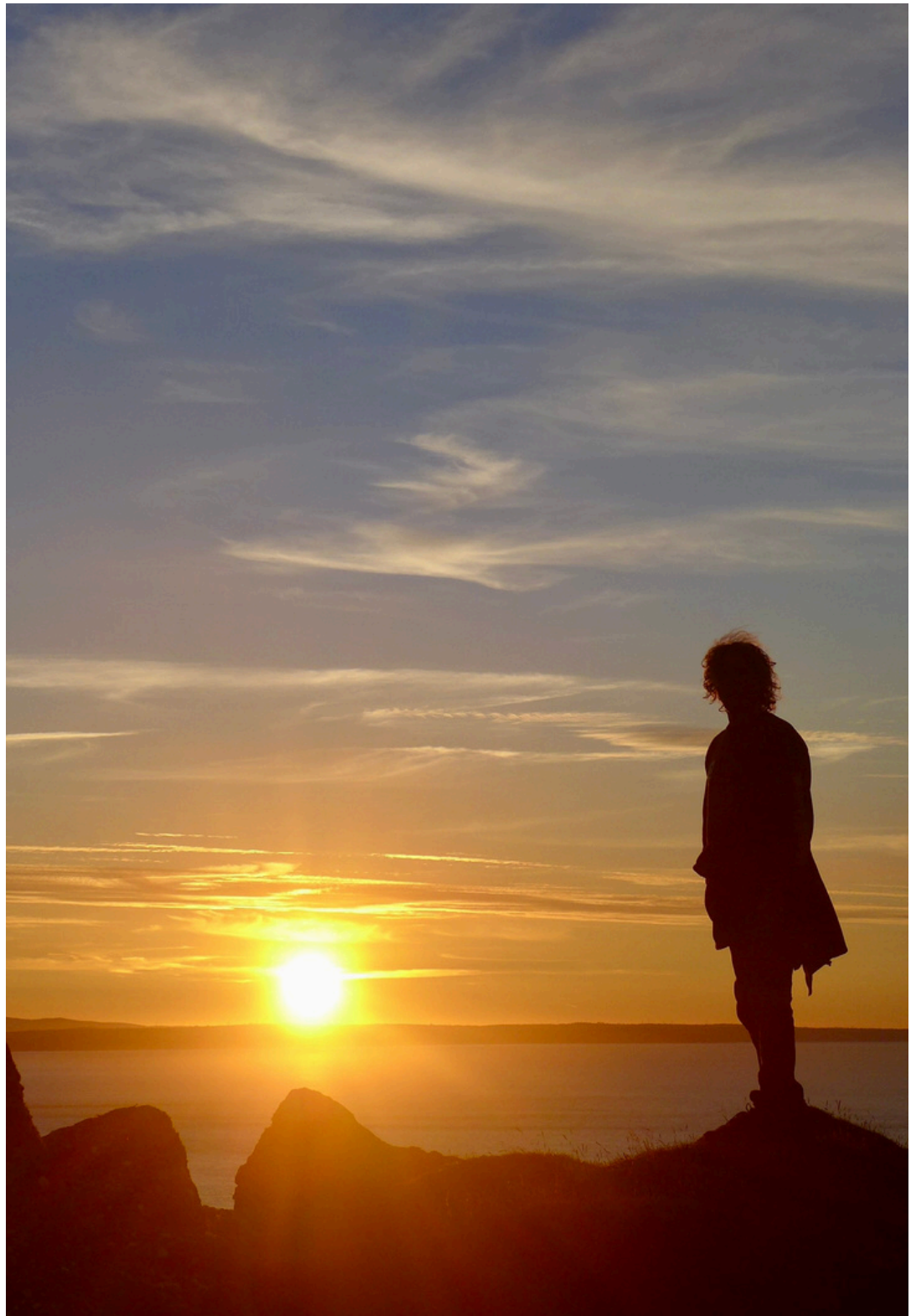


Gower Landscape Connections Consultation



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Introduction: A Shared Vision for Gower

Gower is a place of extraordinary beauty and character — shaped by its coastline, commons, woodlands, wetlands, farms and communities. It is home to some of Wales' most treasured habitats and species, as well as landscapes that hold deep cultural and historical significance.

Over recent months, a core partnership of organisations and stakeholders has been exploring the development of a major Landscape Connections proposal for Gower. Through early conversations with land managers, conservation organisations, communities and local partners, a shared ambition has begun to emerge around the future of nature recovery across the peninsula.

We are now moving into a broader phase of public engagement to help shape and strengthen the proposal further.

The project is being developed for the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Landscape Connections programme and aims to help protect, restore and reconnect Gower's most important landscapes and habitats for future generations.

At the heart of the proposal is a shared ambition:

To create a more connected and more resilient Gower — where nature can thrive and where more people, especially young people, can experience, understand and care for the landscapes around them. The proposal also seeks to contribute to the growing international ambition to protect and effectively manage 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 — often referred to as "30x30".

Gower already contains many of Wales' most important protected habitats and landscapes. Through coordinated habitat restoration, stronger ecological connectivity and long-term community stewardship, this project aims not only to support nature recovery locally, but also to help position Gower as a leading example of how 30x30 can be delivered at a landscape scale.

The discussions and ideas shared so far have helped shape the emerging direction of the project.



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**Your ideas,
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This next phase of engagement is an opportunity to bring those conversations together, hear a wider range of perspectives and continue developing a proposal that reflects the needs, ambitions and knowledge of the communities and landscapes it seeks to support. Your ideas, knowledge and experiences will help shape the next stage of the proposal.

We want to hear from communities, land managers, organisations, schools, volunteers, local businesses and anyone who cares about Gower's future.

Why Gower ?

From windswept commons and flower-rich grasslands to ancient woodland, saltmarsh and dramatic coastline, Gower contains some of the most important and distinctive landscapes in Wales.

These landscapes support a rich variety of wildlife and provide space for recreation, learning, farming, culture and wellbeing. Many are already recognised through national and international designations including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Yet these habitats are increasingly under pressure from fragmentation, habitat loss, invasive species, climate change and changing land management practices.

Protecting nature alone is no longer enough. To meet the ambitions of 30x30, landscapes must become healthier, more resilient and better connected, with nature recovery taking place not only within protected sites but across the wider landscape.

Gower is uniquely placed to demonstrate how this can happen. Its commons, farmland, wetlands, coastline and communities are closely interconnected, creating opportunities to deliver nature recovery at a meaningful landscape scale.

This proposal aims to build on those strengths — helping Gower become a leading example of collaborative, place-based nature recovery in Wales.

Our Emerging Priorities

Restoring Nature Across Gower

At the heart of the project is a commitment to restoring and strengthening the natural landscapes that make Gower so special. Across the peninsula, internationally important habitats such as commons, heathland, grasslands, wetlands and coastal areas support an extraordinary variety of wildlife, but many of these places are increasingly fragmented and under pressure.

We want to work collaboratively with land managers, graziers, communities and partner organisations to improve the condition of these important sites and help reconnect them across the wider landscape. By supporting better coordinated management, conservation grazing, habitat restoration and species recovery, the project aims to create a more resilient and connected network of habitats where nature can recover and flourish.

A key part of the proposal will involve identifying where habitat connectivity can be strengthened — both within protected sites and across the wider landscape. This could include restoring ecological corridors, improving habitat “stepping stones” between sites and working with landowners to support nature-friendly management practices that contribute to landscape-scale recovery.

This approach reflects the wider ambitions of 30x30 by recognising that nature recovery cannot happen through isolated protected sites alone. Healthy ecosystems depend on connected landscapes, long-term stewardship and collaborative action across entire places.

Our ambition is for Gower to become an exemplar of this approach — demonstrating how protected landscapes, commons, farming communities and local people can work together to deliver meaningful and lasting nature recovery.

Working Together with Farmers, Graziers and Landowners

Gower's landscapes have been shaped over generations through farming, grazing and land management. The commons, grasslands, hedgerows and wider mosaic of habitats that define the peninsula today are inseparable from the people who have managed and worked this land over centuries.

This project recognises that long-term nature recovery cannot be delivered to farmers and landowners — it can only be achieved with them.

The proposal is therefore intended to be collaborative from the outset, building on local knowledge, existing stewardship and the practical experience of farmers, graziers and commoners who understand these landscapes best. Rather than imposing a single model of management, the project aims to create opportunities for shared planning, partnership working and practical support that can help land managers deliver outcomes for both nature recovery and resilient farm businesses.

A key part of the project would involve working together to identify where habitat restoration and improved ecological connectivity could complement existing farming systems and long-term land management objectives. This may include opportunities around conservation grazing, wetland restoration, hedgerow enhancement, habitat corridors or more joined-up management between commons and surrounding farmland. Importantly, this work could also help place participating farmers and landowners in a stronger position to respond to emerging environmental policy and funding opportunities, including the future Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS).

As the SFS develops, there is likely to be increasing emphasis on collaborative working, landscape-scale nature recovery, habitat connectivity and environmental outcomes delivered across multiple holdings.

By supporting early partnership building, habitat planning and practical restoration activity, the Landscape Connections project could help farmers and graziers become better prepared for participation in the optional and collaborative layers of the scheme.

The project therefore has the potential not only to support nature recovery, but also to help create the foundations for longer-term environmental resilience and future opportunities for land managers across Gower

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Exploring What Landscape Connections Could Look Like in Practice

The attachments are “model scenarios” are intended to give an indication of the types of activity and approaches that the Landscape Connections project could support across Gower. They are not finalised proposals, but examples designed to help illustrate the project’s emerging direction and encourage ideas, discussion and feedback.

We hope these examples will help communities, land managers, organisations and stakeholders contribute their own knowledge, priorities and suggestions as the proposal continues to develop.

Model Scenario 1

Nature Recovery in Action

Restoring Cefn Bryn Common for Wildlife, Landscape and Future Generations.

Introduction

Cefn Bryn is one of the defining landscapes of Gower. Stretching across the spine of the peninsula, its open commons, heathland, grasslands and wet flushes form part of the Gower Commons Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Cefn Bryn Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

As a nationally and internationally designated site, Cefn Bryn already contributes to the ambitions of "30x30" — the international commitment to protect and effectively manage 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030. Designation alone does not guarantee ecological recovery. Achieving favourable ecological condition and long-term resilience requires active management, collaboration and sustained stewardship.

This model scenario explores how the Landscape Connections project could support sites such as Cefn Bryn as part of a wider programme of nature recovery across Gower — combining habitat restoration, conservation grazing, innovation, community participation and landscape-scale connectivity.

Importantly, the ideas outlined here are intended to stimulate discussion and feedback. They are not fixed proposals, but examples of the types of activity that could be explored through the project.

A Vision for Cefn Bryn

The ambition for Cefn Bryn would be to create a healthier and more resilient commons landscape where habitats are improving, grazing systems are sustainable, and wildlife is better connected across the wider Gower landscape.

Rather than focusing solely on the commons itself, the project would look at how Cefn Bryn connects to surrounding farmland, wetlands, hedgerows and other commons and SSSIs across Gower. The aim would be to strengthen these ecological links so that habitats function more effectively as part of a wider nature recovery network.

At the same time, the project would seek to strengthen collaboration between graziers, farmers, landowners, communities and conservation organisations — recognising that long-term nature recovery depends on partnership working and practical land management.

The project could also provide a strong foundation for future participation in the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS), particularly the optional and collaborative layers expected to support landscape-scale habitat restoration, connectivity and collaborative environmental management.

In this sense, Landscape Connections could act as an enabling and preparatory workstream — helping build partnerships, test approaches, develop habitat plans and support practical action that complements the future direction of farm support policy in Wales.

Restoring Habitat Condition

The ecological richness of Cefn Bryn depends on active management. Without intervention, habitats that were once varied and species-rich can become dominated by scrub, bracken and coarse grasses.

The NRW Gower Commons Grazing Report highlights the importance of grazing in maintaining habitats such as molinia grassland and wet heath. Grazing alone is unlikely to address all of the challenges facing the commons.

Potential restoration activities could include:

- Scrub and bracken management
- Restoration of wet flushes and marshy grassland
- Pollinator habitat enhancement
- Invasive species removal
- Rotational vegetation management
- Small-scale hydrological restoration
- Restoration of habitat "stepping stones" between fragmented areas

A dedicated annual restoration budget could help deliver practical interventions both on Cefn Bryn and across adjoining habitats where this contributes to wider ecological connectivity.

Rather than applying interventions uniformly, activity would be guided by habitat mapping, ecological assessment and ongoing monitoring to identify where restoration work could deliver the greatest benefit.

Supporting Sustainable Grazing

Conservation grazing would remain central to habitat recovery on Cefn Bryn, but the focus would be on supporting the right grazing, in the right places, at the right times. Different livestock species interact with the landscape differently. Cattle and ponies, for example, can help control scrub and coarse vegetation, while sheep can maintain shorter swards in other areas.

The project could explore more adaptive and collaborative approaches to grazing management, including:

- Seasonal and targeted grazing patterns
- Mixed grazing systems
- Short-duration "pulse grazing"
- Shared grazing initiatives between graziers
- Better coordination of grazing across commons areas
- Infrastructure improvements that support livestock management

The project could also explore innovative approaches that help strengthen both habitat management and public engagement.

This might include:

- Community grazing clubs that help people understand and support commoning
- "Rent-a-cow" or livestock sponsorship initiatives
- Demonstration grazing projects
- Volunteer support initiatives linked to habitat management

These approaches could help:

- Direct grazing pressure more precisely
- Reduce reliance on physical fencing
- Support flexible habitat management
- Improve coordination across fragmented commons landscapes

Innovation, Monitoring and Participation

The project could also explore how innovation, technology and community participation can support long-term nature recovery.

Drone technology and digital habitat mapping could help monitor habitat change, identify restoration priorities and improve understanding of ecological connectivity across the wider landscape.

This could support:

- Monitoring scrub encroachment
- Assessing habitat condition
- Tracking restoration progress
- Identifying opportunities for habitat connectivity
- Supporting citizen science and education activities

Community participation would also be central to the project.

The project could support:

- Citizen science programmes
- Pollinator and species surveys
- Habitat monitoring
- Community biodiversity recording
- Young people's conservation activities
- Practical volunteering opportunities

Alongside regular volunteering, the project could also trial more flexible approaches such as "volunteering flash mobs" — short, highly practical conservation events focused on visible habitat restoration activities.

These approaches could help make participation more accessible while building wider understanding of how commons landscapes are managed and restored.

Reconnecting Nature Across Gower

Although Cefn Bryn is an important habitat area in its own right, species recovery increasingly depends on landscapes functioning as connected ecological networks rather than isolated sites.

The Landscape Connections project would therefore look beyond Cefn Bryn itself and explore how habitats across Gower can become better connected over time.

This could include:

- Restoring habitat corridors
- Improving hedgerows and field margins
- Reconnecting wetlands and marshy habitats
- Supporting habitat restoration on adjoining farmland
- Identifying and strengthening "stepping stone" habitats between commons and SSSIs

By supporting collaborative planning, habitat mapping and practical restoration work, the project could also help land managers prepare for future SFS collaborative opportunities focused on landscape-scale environmental outcomes. By supporting collaborative planning, habitat mapping and practical restoration work, the project could also help land managers prepare for future SFS collaborative opportunities focused on landscape-scale environmental outcomes

Working Together

Restoring Cefn Bryn would require collaboration between commoners, graziers, farmers, conservation organisations, communities and young people.

The project aims to build on the knowledge, skills and relationships that already exist across Gower while creating opportunities for shared learning and collaborative action.

Importantly, this model scenario is intended as a starting point for discussion rather than a finished plan.

Model Scenario 2

Engagement and Outreach

From Classroom to Stewardship

Introduction

This model scenario illustrates how the Gower Landscape Connections project could help create a long-term journey of engagement for young people that begins with curiosity and discovery and gradually develops into participation, stewardship and leadership within Gower's landscapes.

The scenario is intended to demonstrate the type of youth engagement pathway the project could support alongside its wider programme of habitat restoration and landscape-scale nature recovery.

At its heart is the recognition that meaningful connections with nature are rarely created through a single visit or activity alone. They are built over time through repeated experiences, practical involvement and opportunities to feel part of something bigger.

The project could therefore support a layered journey of engagement, beginning in classrooms and communities before moving into direct experiences within Gower itself and, for some young people, leading towards a more structured Junior Ranger-style pathway connected to the stewardship of the landscape.

Awareness: Discovering Gower

For many young people, particularly those living in urban communities or with limited access to the outdoors, the journey could begin before they physically experience Gower's landscapes.

Bilingual learning resources and creative educational materials, such as interactive maps, short films, storytelling resources and citizen science activities, will allow schools and youth organisations to explore Gower's habitats, wildlife and cultural heritage within the classroom. These resources can help teachers deliver topics such as biodiversity, climate change, commons management and nature recovery in ways that feel relevant, practical and locally connected.

Building on this early engagement, activity officers and partner organisations can bring Gower's landscapes into schools and youth settings through interactive visits and workshops.

These sessions would aim to make nature recovery tangible and relatable. Young people might handle habitat maps, explore drone imagery showing changes in the commons over time, meet graziers and conservation staff or take part in species identification activities linked to real restoration work taking place across Gower.

A class in Swansea, for example, might begin by exploring pollinator habitats around their school grounds before comparing them with species-rich grasslands on Gower's commons. Through these activities, young people would begin to see themselves as connected to the wider landscape around them and develop confidence and purpose in their response to it.

The intention would not simply be to provide information, but to create a sense that young people are being invited into Gower's landscapes and are able to participate in their future recovery.

These early interactions could also help identify young people who may wish to become more involved over time through extra-curricular activities, citizen science, volunteering or longer-term participation opportunities.

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Experience: Experiencing Gower First-Hand

For many young people, this foundation would begin with positive, supported experiences within Gower's landscapes themselves. Visits to commons, wetlands, coastlines and restoration sites could provide opportunities to spend time in nature in ways that feel welcoming, social and purposeful, particularly for those less familiar or confident in rural environments. Rather than simply observing the landscape, young people might take part in guided walks, creative activities or introductory conservation tasks alongside volunteers and community groups, helping them build confidence and a stronger sense of connection to natural spaces that may otherwise feel distant from everyday life in towns and urban areas.

Understanding: Learning Through Participation

As confidence and familiarity grow, these experiences could deepen into more active participation in understanding how landscapes are restored and managed. Young people might help clear invasive scrub from heathland, take part in species surveys, assist with habitat monitoring or contribute to practical restoration work linked to the wider Landscape Connections programme. A group visiting Cefn Bryn, for example, might spend part of the day working alongside volunteers and graziers before learning how conservation grazing supports biodiversity across the commons. Through direct involvement, participants would gain a stronger understanding of habitats, species recovery, farming practices and the wider conservation challenges shaping Gower's landscapes.

Participation: Developing a Junior Ranger Pathway

For those who want to continue their involvement, the project could support a more structured Junior Ranger-style pathway inspired by approaches used in protected landscapes across Europe.

This would not necessarily begin as a formal accreditation programme, but rather as a long-term framework for participation, learning and stewardship linked directly to Gower's landscapes and nature recovery work.

Young people involved in this pathway could gradually develop practical conservation skills while building a stronger sense of identity and belonging connected to the landscape. They might contribute to habitat monitoring, assist with species recording, support practical conservation tasks or help communicate nature recovery stories within their schools and communities. Technology and innovation could also form part of the experience. Participants might use drones to help monitor habitat change, contribute to digital mapping projects or take part in community biodiversity surveys that feed into wider ecological monitoring work across Gower.

The project could also explore more creative and flexible ways for young people to participate. "Volunteering flash mobs", for example, could bring together groups of young people for highly practical short-duration restoration events focused on visible conservation activity such as scrub clearance, wetland restoration or habitat management.

At the same time, initiatives such as community grazing clubs or "rent-a-cow" sponsorship schemes could help young people and families better understand the role grazing plays in maintaining commons landscapes while creating stronger links between communities and land management.

Importantly, not every young person would follow this pathway in the same way or to the same depth.

The model is intended to provide progression opportunities for those who wish to continue their involvement while keeping participation accessible and flexible.

Stewardship: Future Pathways

Over time, the project could help create genuine pathways into environmental skills, volunteering and future careers linked to conservation, farming and land management.

Young people who continue engaging with the project could move into mentoring, leadership or ambassador roles, helping support younger participants and contributing to wider community engagement activities. Others may develop interests in practical conservation, ecological surveying, grazing management or environmental technology that lead towards placements, apprenticeships or training opportunities linked to the wider landscape recovery programme.

The aim would not necessarily be to create professional conservationists in every case, but to help build a generation of people who feel connected to Gower's landscapes and confident participating in their future stewardship. In this way, the project could contribute not only to ecological recovery, but also to the long-term social and cultural foundations needed to sustain nature recovery into the future.

Why This Matters

Nature recovery is not only about restoring habitats. It is also about restoring relationships — between people and landscape, communities and stewardship, learning and participation.

By creating a journey from classroom discovery to active involvement in caring for Gower's landscapes, the Landscape Connections project could help develop the long-term support, skills and stewardship needed for nature recovery to succeed.

Most importantly, it could help ensure that future generations experience Gower not simply as visitors, but as active participants in shaping its future.