



# Community Kites: A community engagement and community arts project

Vikki Butler

Oct. 2016



SAVING GOWER –  
FOR ALL IT'S WORTH  
GOWER LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP  
ACHUB GWYR –  
MAE'N WERTH Y BYD  
PARTNERIAETH TIRWEDD GWYR



Taliesin



This project has been part funded by the Welsh Government Sustainable Development Fund

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	3
Section 1: About the Community Kites project	4
Section 2: What we did and who was involved	5
Section 3: Assessing the project outcomes	7
Section 4: What works in Community Engagement?	11

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Funders**

We are grateful to our funders- Gower AONB Sustainable Development Fund, The Taliesin Arts Centre and The Heritage Lottery funded Gower Landscape Partnership- for supporting the Community Kites project and enabling development of the project from delivery in 2015 to 2016.

### **Project partners**

We could not have delivered this project without partnership working. We are grateful to Catrin Jones, local artist, who provided the creative knowledge for making the kites and staff at Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council who gave us premises that enabled the community engagement and kite making to take place and who worked to recruit participants to the project. Lastly, we are grateful to the participants who enthusiastically gave up their time and ideas in order for the project to have a depth of engagement and insights into the barriers and levers to engagement.

### **C.A.R.P. Team members**

Isabel Griffin: Project manager, creative development of the kites and exhibition leader

Vikki Butler: Community development activities for engagement, monitoring and evaluation manager

D Murphy: Community development fieldwork facilitator

## SECTION 1: ABOUT THE KITES PROJECT

### Rationale for the Kites project

The Community Kites project was initiated in 2015 with a kite making workshop and kite flying day involving two community groups from central Swansea. In 2016 funding was secured from Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), the Taliesin Art Centre and Gower Landscape Partnership (GLP) to undertake the following three activities:

1. To provide 7 workshops with 5- 7 community members involving them in the planning and decisions surrounding a community kite flying day.
2. To provide a kite making workshop and kite flying day.
3. To create an exhibition of community members' kites and photographic images of kite making and flying.

The purpose of these activities was to meet the following outcomes:

- To sustain and develop social and physical well-being through encouraging physical activity and healthy living in an outdoors environment for people who do not currently participate in outdoor physical activity or access the natural environment.
- To increase knowledge about the uniqueness of Gower's natural habitats and heritage, developing community partnerships to assist in the process of promoting and enhancing appreciation of the AONB countryside.
- To develop "champions" for Gower. These will be community members who know bus routes and opportunities for days out and have learnt some event management skills so that they can sustain their engagement with the Gower countryside and arrange their own days out/ visits.
- To enable marginalised communities to work with professional artists and explore fun, creative self-expression through delivery of unique arts training culminating in an exhibition at the Taliesin Arts centre to celebrate the AONB 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Swansea International Festival.
- To increase the engagement of black and minority ethnic communities within the Gower landscape and countryside facilities; overcoming barriers to access through enhanced participatory engagement.
- To contribute to the economic sustainability of the AONB through the visitor economy and employment of Gower based artists, food producers and organisations to deliver the project.

## SECTION 2: WHAT DID WE DO AND WHO WAS INVOLVED?

### Partnership working

Initially Community Kites was designed to be a partnership between C.A.R.P. Collaborations as facilitator organisation and two community groups. However, shortness of available time between having notification of one of the funding sources, delivering workshops and undertaking an exhibition; coupled with the number of interested participants within one organisation, led C.A.R.P. Collaborations to work in partnership with one organisation, The Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council (SBREC). We also worked in partnership with a Gower based artist, Catrin Jones, to ensure access to unique quality arts training and worked in partnership with the Taliesin Arts Centre to create an exhibition.

### What did we deliver?

We delivered 6 workshop sessions. 5 of these were with a community planning group and 1 of these was with the planning group and their wider communities and families. The sessions were:

Session 1: *Introduction to the Kites project and the role of the planning group*  
Using photographs and discussion we explored why Gower was an area of outstanding natural beauty, including the beaches and wildlife within the area, and why community engagement in the project was being sought.  
(5 participants)

Session 2: *Planning group visit to 3 Gower beaches- Horton, Port Eynon and Oxwich*  
Using public transport, we visited places on Gower, scoping them for a successful venue for a community kite flying day. In the process of doing this, participants also became familiar with 3 different parts of Gower and the local bus services.  
(7 participants)

Session 3: *Planning group decisions: arrangements for the kite flying day*  
Using participatory activities we assessed each beach and venue. This included thinking about issues of risk, accessibility, specific needs that children or older people may have and food requirements.  
(6 participants)

Session 4: *Kite making*  
We offered a kite making workshop with a choice of two different types of kites.  
(8 participants)

Session 5: *kite flying day*  
Using a village hall as a base, a full day in Port Eynon. The weather stopped us flying kites in the morning so we made more kites to enable those participants who were not part of the

planning group to have a go at making them. We ate lunch in the hall and flew kites on the beach in the afternoon.

(23 participants and 3 volunteers)

**Session 6: *Reflections on successes and potential improvements***

A focus group that enabled participants of the planning group to reflect upon their own participation; the extent to which they had learnt about Gower's unique nature and barriers to their further engagement in Gower based activities.

(4 participants)

Initial plans were to deliver 7 workshops, the extra workshop being planned for between sessions 2 and 3 was expected to contain a mentoring process between participants of the 2 organisations. This 7<sup>th</sup> workshop did not occur because:

1. There were only 5 weeks available between the start of the project and the kite flying day, so there was not time for 7 workshops or building partnership working with 2 organisations.
2. We only worked with 1 organisation so a mentoring workshop was not appropriate.

However, to compensate for this, we spent extra time building capacity and knowledge of the planning group participants to be "Gower ambassadors" for their communities and ensured there was an additional member of staff available to co-facilitate the kite flying day. An exhibition opened in The Taliesin Arts Centre on Monday 12th September, after the last planning group session, and it documented the Kites project, highlighting the artistic quality of kites. (It ended on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> 2016).

**Who was involved?**

In total Community Kites involved 23 participants from a range of Swansea's black and minority ethnic communities and enabled intergenerational activity due to a wide age range.

<b>Age breakdown</b>	<b>Under 16</b>	<b>16- 30</b>	<b>31- 60</b>	<b>60+</b>
<b>No participants</b>	4	7	4	8

Two thirds of participants were female and one third male. The planning group had a membership of 7, and each participant attended at least 2 sessions, with an average of 5 participants at each session. The kite flying day included 3 volunteers who helped tidy the kitchen and film activities in order to add to the photographic images. It was staffed by a community artist and 4 facilitators; 3 from C.A.R.P. Collaborations and 1 from SBREC.

## SECTION 3: ASSESSING THE PROJECT OUTCOMES

### **Sustaining and developing social and physical well-being through encouraging physical activity**

All of the sessions developed the planning group's social well-being. The visit to the Gower beaches undertaken in session 2 and the kite flying day both involved physical activity. The visit in session 2 included a beach walk from Horton to Port Eynon, a walk along a section of Oxwich beach and a walk around Oxwich church and woods. The planned itinerary for the kite flying day included kite flying in the morning and a walk to the salt house with a short history tour of Port Eynon to impart the value of heritage in the afternoon. However, we had to change the itinerary because of exceptionally wet and windy weather. We therefore made kites in the morning based at Port Eynon village hall and flew them in the afternoon. It was apparent that a natural seaside environment was a new experience for many of the participants. Some of the children had not walked in sand dunes before, and a few older people had not been on a British beach before; the wind-swept wild weather added to it being a unique activity. Social and physical well-being were achieved through:

1. Some participants revisiting their childhood memories of kite flying in countries of birth and sharing these memories with families and friends.
2. Being outside and having family activities. It was clear many of the families did not spend much time outside together.
3. Demonstrating that British rain and wind do not stop people having fun; the majority of the group were laughing and enjoying themselves whilst still getting wet and watching the weather test the strength of the kites they had made.
4. The planning group knew each other from attending a weekly art group but Kites supported them to advance friendships, learn more about each other's' cultures and meet each other's families and friends.

The Kites project acted as a catalyst to further the participants' engagement in more cultural, social and outdoor activity with some participants attending new activities, such as the science festival at café 360 on Swansea sea front, visiting the Taliesin and arranging further trips to Gower. In summary, the monitoring forms reported:

'It was good and well planned. So organised! Everyone had a good time'

### **Increase knowledge about the uniqueness of Gower's natural habitats and heritage**

We focused upon Gower's natural habitats and heritage from the outset of the project. We delivered a slide show of different aspects of Gower in order to recruit participants to the planning group. The slide show included information about AONB and Gower's history and different aspects of Gower's habitats and heritage under the themes- Landscapes (beaches and hills), Wildlife, Castles and Activities (all of which were outdoor activities e.g. surfing, paragliding, boat trips). The aim of the presentation was to inspire community members to become engaged in the Kites project and it was effective since all of the group signed up to

be a part of the project and an additional 2 members were recruited for some of the planning workshops from friendships and family. Only one member of the planning group had been to Gower before and the pictures of Gower drew discussion with participants about how beautiful the area was and that they had not known this before the slide show. On the trip out to visit different beaches the facilitator drew attention to particular features, relating them back to the slide show, for example, the lizards that can be found in certain sand dunes, the rare birds at Oxwich marsh, castles etc. This information was reiterated during the kite making workshop where slides were shown on a loop to inspire ideas for decorating the kites.

On the kite flying day approximately one fifth of the participants had visited Gower before, but these were all children and young people who had visited Gower on school trips. Flying kites introduced participants to the beauty and facilities of a Gower beach and uniqueness of the sand dunes. Whilst not as successful at stressing aspects of heritage because of the necessity to stay inside rather than undertake a walk to the salt house, the day out did introduce participants to the natural landscape and village heritage.

### **Developing “champions” for Gower**

The planning group became champions for Gower. Prior to involvement with Kites, all but one of the participants had not been to Gower, none of the participants knew how geographically close Gower is to Swansea, none were aware of the bus services and no one had knowledge of Gower’s unique landscape and heritage. Through using the bus service, pointing out landmarks, and sign posting to further information such as giving out bus timetables or leaflets, participants of the planning group gained knowledge about Gower, and from using public transport, visiting different villages and walking on beaches they appreciated the natural environment of Gower and wanted to visit the area again. The planning group chose Port Eynon as the place for flying kites, but members liked Oxwich so much that they immediately started planning a visit to Oxwich with other members of their community. Participants welcomed the visits explaining that it provided concrete information, reduced the fear of getting stranded in an unknown place and gave confidence to visit other places on Gower. The Kites project opened a whole new geographical area to participants who have never been there before. Older participants were delighted to know that they could use their bus passes on Gower and planned on trying to go to other places, but only those areas that felt safe and did not involve risking getting stranded or a Gower-based bus connection (e.g. First bus number 14 to 3 cliffs and 3 to Newton/ Langland and NAT bus number 118 to Rhossili).

The planning group also learnt some skills for project and event management. They developed an appreciation for others’ needs and preferences; and recognised that these needed to be taken into account even if not important for their immediate family or community. Learning included the importance of, for example, life guards for children, distance and accessibility for disabled people, importance of food preferences etc. These skills were mainly learnt from creating criteria for assessing the different venues which included comparing the distance from halls to the beaches, the quality of public toilets,



whether lifeguards were present, local facilities such as shops and cafes, terrain regarding mobility difficulties (e.g. uphill gravel paths), the quality of the beach and the size of the hall. The Kites project has been a learning curve for the participants of the planning group. It was the first time that they had made decisions on behalf of their communities groups. The participants said that they enjoyed helping with the planning because it was a good way to learn more about Gower and what to consider if they were going out with others from their communities.

The kite flying day served to introduce more people from Swansea and Carmarthen's black and minority ethnic communities to the Gower. Many participants of the kite flying day were asking the community champions how to get there and people who attended as a family group were discussing how to visit Gower again as a family. This suggests that the role of community champion was successful and the project met its' aims with regards to this outcome.

More project lead in time would have enabled a better depth of participation from the planning group. Whilst the project objective was met, it could have been improved through, for example, two visits to Gower to visit local producers for food purposes and introduced topics such as sustainability and environmental conservation whilst also enabling the champions to become familiar with different parts of Gower and use bus connections.

### **Undertaking creative activity and self-expression**

The kite making activities were highly enjoyed by all participants; and many asked if there would be a repeat workshop. We took advantage of severe wet and windy weather and made more kites in the village hall the morning of the kite flying day before flying them. Many participants commented that they enjoyed being creative with family and friends. Participants also appreciated that a professional artist was facilitating the kite making workshops and that there were two facilitators who knew safety and mechanics of kite flying.

Whilst making the kites the slide show of Gower served to remind participants of the visit to Gower and embed some of the information. All participants were excited to know that something they had made and decorated was going to be displayed within an art exhibition. The planning group explained this in more detail, saying that having an exhibition at the end of the project gave a sense of achievement. The exhibition at the Taliesin Arts Centre also served as a good exit point and an event for participants to go to together, sustaining their social well-being and confidence in visiting new places as well as increasing their culture capital.

### **Increasing the engagement of black and minority ethnic communities**

The Kites project specifically aimed to engage with black and minority ethnic communities and increase their engagement in undertaking activities on Gower, their engagement in decision making within a project and in building skills for continued engagement. The Kites

project delivered an inter-generational activity with half of the participants being at either end of the age spectrum. It also contributed to social cohesion through engaging people from a wide range of different cultures and ethnic heritages including Somali, British Hong Kong, Chinese, Persian, and Welsh Bangladeshi. The activities were informal which enabled shared learning between participants regarding their own cultural customs and heritage.

The Kites project had three main successes with regards to social inclusion. Firstly, it enabled intergenerational work. Secondly, it enabled a number of women to enjoy physical activity in the natural environment because kite flying is a gender neutral activity across different cultures. Lastly, through utilising neighbourhood networks, it served to increase black and minority ethnic communities' engagement in Gower activities and the natural environment. In an end of project evaluation interview SBREC staff suggested that the community champions model worked and was a beneficial approach:

'... minority groups don't always have the confidence to go to new places. There are worries like getting stuck, information is very complex and therefore not understandable. Maps can be confusing; some people have not been to school and can't read English... the visits worked ... we need community champions.'

### **Contributing to the economic sustainability of the AONB**

As far as was possible the Kites project used Gower based businesses, organisations and infrastructure. It employed a Gower based artist for the Kites making and flying, used a Gower café for lunch during the 3 beach visits, rented a village hall and used the local bus service. It was difficult to find buffet catering that supplied affordable local produce that included halal or/ and vegetarian selection so the buffet for the kite flying day was sourced from a Swansea company.

Additionally the Kites project has led to increased knowledge about local facilities in different parts of Gower. Facilitators circulated maps of the Gower peninsula downloaded from tourist information websites and these included activity businesses that were available across the peninsula and cafes that were near to specific beauty points. Of particular interest were the Gower kite flying centre, Periswood falconry, castles, farm shops, strawberry picking, and cafes near beaches.

## SECTION 4: WHAT WORKS IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

### Why report upon community engagement?

The Taliesin Arts Centre aims to ensure wide access to community arts workshops and events. The Gower AONB Sustainable Development Fund seeks to conserve and enhance the local characteristics of culture, wildlife, landscape, land use and community; exploring viable mechanisms for sustainable development. The Gower Landscape Partnership's (GLP) Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) aims to meet the over-arching themes of Learning, Conservation and Participation; and has as a central strand developing access and enriching experiences for new and existing visitors. The GLP has a stated aim to:

'Help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.'

To that end GLP has identified the need to connect with under-represented local audiences, including those from BME backgrounds, people with disabilities, and socio economically deprived areas of Swansea and Llanelli. The Kites project aimed to meet the engagement aims of all funders and to report upon methods and successes of engagement as well as detail the barriers that were identified by the participants themselves.

### Different levels of 'Engagement'

HLF guidance on engagement and participation acknowledges that the amount of community participation will vary depending on the project, the capacity and the experience of the delivery organisations. HLF guidance on audience development outlines why audience development is important and how community engagement should form a part of audience development. Both sets of guidance suggest five levels for participation, moving from passive to active:

1. Informing: telling people about your project.
2. Consulting: giving people choices about what happens in your project and a chance to shape it.
3. Deciding together: creating opportunities for people to make decisions about and influence the direction of your project.
4. Acting together: creating opportunities for people to develop and deliver your project, taking a role in heritage conservation and/or learning activities.
5. Supporting others to take the lead: empowering people to have ownership of the project, make final decisions and deliver activities with some independence.

There is a wealth of published research, empirical guidance and anecdotal evidence concerning non engagement in accessing the natural environment, green space and heritage sites produced by government agencies, environmental and health organisations, charities and universities. Similarly, there is also a large body of existing guidance and best practice principles regarding public engagement and assessing action towards audience

engagement and community participation, including the 'The National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales'. The Kites project evaluation does not seek to replace these existing literatures but to offer some practical experiences that may contribute to knowledge about how to put the guidance into practice.

### **How to move from 'taking part' to longer term engagement**

The Kites project aimed to enable deeper levels of engagement than just joining in an activity. It was designed to enable an engagement 'path' so participants moved from 'taking part' to a position of being engaged and making decisions. However, because Kites was relatively short (it lasted for 6 sessions over a 5 week period) it did not have the lasting impact that longer term engagement work can have. For example; if Kites was a 6 month or year-long project, participants could have become involved in delivering aspects of the project; undertaking the monitoring and evaluation and other project management tasks. The Kites project also aimed to support participants to move from a group model, whereby participants are reliant upon a specific support organisation; to an individual model, whereby individuals feel able to undertake their own activities, lead others to join in those activities and have the knowledge to feel confident in doing so; thereby creating "champions". The Kites project imparted knowledge and information to empower individual community members to enjoy Gower without a group support structure. This approach enabled independence but is also conducive to supporting sustainability and legacy after the GLP HLF project ends as well as building community member skills.

1. **Undertake activities that are of interest to everyone.** We used kite making as a mechanism to go and undertake outdoor activity upon Gower, but the planning group was already involved in arts, so making and decorating kites was an extension of existing interests. Additionally, a few of the members had made and flown kites in their childhood and were excited as adults to get the opportunity to do this with their families. Throughout the project facilitators developed the project through building upon participants existing interests- for example, when supporting participants to think about needs for the kite flying day we started from a point of thinking about the needs of personal family and friends; some of the participants were interested in history which gave a link to giving heritage information, whilst others collected shells on the visit to the beaches for personal art projects, which gave space for giving information about wildlife.
2. **When building champions make all the information accessible and easy to absorb.** Within Kites we used photographs of wildlife and beaches, rather than relying upon leaflets and descriptions, and offered practical experience for participants to know about transport and sites of interest on Gower. We had asked the planning group members what format they wanted information in and knew that some members found it hard to understand written English and found maps confusing. We worked with participants on the information they wanted and needed and participants said that the visit worked really well to increase their knowledge and to be involved in planning because it built their confidence and enabled sustained participation; i.e. they felt

confident to go to Gower alone or with family and friends to the places we had visited and they were assessing their confidence to visit Gower sites of interest that they had not been to before. By the end of the project participants were still fearful of going to North Gower and the western end of Gower due to scarce transport and unfamiliarity that could lead to being stranded, but they had confidence to visit East Gower and parts of the South coast that had regular direct bus services.

3. **Gradually give participants control.** Through careful facilitation power gradually shifted from the group facilitator to participants; culminating with participants making decisions under the facilitation of staff if needed. At the start of the project participants referred to the facilitator as 'miss' or 'our leader' but gradually they used first names and referred to the kite flying day as 'our day out'. When participants own an event, group or activity the project will naturally develop according to their decisions, occasionally with requirement for facilitation or guidance from staff.
4. **Invite participants to help with the planning.** Whether it is an activity, event or regular group meeting participants will know what they want for themselves, their family or friends. Include participants in the development of a timetable for the tasks that are need to be completed since it enables delegation of tasks and results in skill development. The Kites project did not have the time to be flexible with dates for planning group meetings, but feedback was that the project would have been better if the timetable had been flexible with key tasks and dates negotiated and delegated. With longer project development time participants can create the project timetable in partnership with facilitators. The Kites project could only delegate tasks superficially and with little responsibility because of the available time.
5. **Vary the methods that are used to engage the participants.** For example, Kites used slides and photographs, visits and checklists, participatory appraisal, and discussion. Each meeting with participants must be engaging or participants will drop out and methods that suite staff may not be the methods that best suite participants. For example, Kites found one particular funders' monitoring forms difficult to accurately complete since they relied upon a high level of written English, but verbal methods of reflection worked well.
6. **Maintain contact with participants, particularly between meetings and sessions.** The nature of this contact will vary according to the participants but facilitators should be flexible and be able to offer texts, phonecalls, what's app, a facebook page event etc. Kites predominantly used phone calls because verbal communication was easier than written communication for most of the participants.
7. **Undertake regular reviews with participants.** Kites was short and time limited therefore our review meeting formed a part of the project evaluation. However, if more time had been available it could easily have been a 'what next?' planning meeting. For a longer term project, the next stage of engagement would not have had to have been focused upon an activity. Participants wanted to go to different parts of Gower and discover new places. The next stage would naturally therefore have been to support participants in organising their own community days' out; giving information and mentoring when

needed. Reviews offer time for reflection and discussion of enjoyment of the process of engagement and not just the content of an activity.

8. **Enable individual agency.** Ensure the group you are working with functions as a group of individuals rather than as a bloc. Healthy community member planning groups enable individuals to leave and to join and recognise that the group is not going to be homogeneous. A facilitator will need to be aware of how groups are formed, and how there are changes in group dynamics when members leave or join as well as being able to find resolution and compromise between sub groups of people. Kites was too short for members to leave or join, but it was not a homogeneous group, with members having differences in culture and ages that influenced what participants wanted within the kites activity day. Funders and project planners may describe homogeneous groups e.g. “black and minority ethnic communities” but engagement activities must recognise differences within these terms and umbrella groupings. (Another example would be ‘young people’ or ‘older people’ - sharing one characteristic does not mean a homogeneous group).
9. **Be aware of cultural acceptabilities and what participants consider appropriate for themselves.** People of different ages, cultural heritages, and genders have different social norms and expected patterns of behaviour. We decided to fly kites because we knew that it was an outdoor activity that was acceptable for women of all ages from minority ethnic communities and it was a straightforward way of engaging participants in an environment that was new to them. Some of the participants had specific food requirements such as needing halal, vegetarian and cheese-free food. Facilitators need to know when they can challenge boundaries and when they need to adhere to boundaries. A trivial example from within the Kites project is that older participants wanted to sit at a table indoors to eat lunch. As facilitators we wanted a beach based picnic but the majority of participants were not willing and so facilitators accommodated this preference.
10. **Manage expectations.** As participants gradually take ownership of a project through increased engagement they may require things that are outside of the project’s scope or expect the project to achieve more than it can, for example, that the project can continue beyond its funding or can accommodate a range of activities and not just one. Facilitators need to genuinely consider participants suggestions but not promise that suggestions or expectations will be met and be able to give clear reasons as to why something is not possible.
11. **Take fears seriously.** When places and activities are unknown they can often cause fears that may seem unfounded to people who regularly go to those places or do those activities. However, people’s fears act as barriers to their participation so facilitators need to take all fears seriously, no matter how puzzling or unfounded they may appear. For example when a place is unknown it is common to fear getting stranded with no way of getting home. People who are not familiar with British coastlines and wildlife have fears of dangerous tides, wildlife and plants (e.g. whether plants sting, whether lizards bite or snakes are poisonous) and sometimes storms and gusty weather (particularly if

their country of origin or heritage is a place that experiences typhoons or cyclones). Practical information can waylay fears and enable engagement.

12. **Use word of mouth and people's existing networks.** Being able to bring a family member or a friend to a place or activity and expanding the initial number of participants can enable sustained participation and means participants are more likely to get engaged if they are nervous or do not know anyone else at an activity.
13. **Have an exit strategy that leads to a sense of accomplishment.** The Kites project ended with reflective evaluation and a public exhibition of some participants' kites. Having an end goal enables participants to know when the project has finished and stops a project petering out or abruptly ending.

### Barriers to joining an activity on Gower

The barriers faced by people who do not currently access the outdoors or Gower's natural environments are many and this is not an exhaustive list but rather explores some of the barriers that the Kites project experienced as a guide for other projects who may wish to undertake similar engagement activities.

1. **Transport.** There is good public transport during the summer months across Gower but understanding the bus timetables is difficult; particularly where connections are to be made. The difficulties are compounded by the facts that there are 2 bus services that serve Gower (one on week days and Saturdays and the other bank holidays and Sundays), that one bus service does not start in town but in a suburb and route maps that show connections and orientate travellers to different places are not readily available. Web searches lead to a number of different services and information sites some of which are not up to date. Bus drivers were very helpful but not necessarily accurate in their information and were not sure of best places for connections.
2. **Cost of transport.** An all-day ticket costs £5 per adult which does not seem much for being able to travel anywhere across Gower and is also a straightforward ticketing system. However, if you need to travel to the bus station before getting a Gower bus it can be approximately an additional £4 cost per person. When this is added up, a day trip to Gower for two adults and two children could cost £27 (assuming that child fares are half the amount of adult fares).
3. **A real fear of being stranded.** Project participants were fearful that if they missed a bus connection, got on the wrong bus or mis-read the timetable they would be stuck miles from home. There is no stated commitment on bus stops or timetables to connections being maintained and at bus stops tourists shared stories about having been stuck in various villages during their stay. This means that the fear of becoming stranded is very real and is enhanced by not knowing taxi numbers, not having enough money for a taxi back to Swansea should a bus problem occur and not being in a familiar area.

4. **Poor marketing.** Participants were unanimous that they did not know where to go on Gower. Upon a visit to the bus station we found no posters or readily available information about the weekday bus service, bus routes, timetables or sites of interest. Whilst there is an information stand you need to know what you want to ask in order to get the information rather than being able to sift different options. The city centre tourist information office is closed and there are no leaflets available to pick up. An online search offers a range of tourist information from different agencies but is very general unless you already know what you are looking for and where it is geographically located. Additionally, online information serves to exclude people who have limited use of English or older people (5 of the Kites planning group members were digitally excluded). The project facilitators printed off maps of Gower from tourist information sites that gave this key information; but staff had to search the web for it and whilst a fantastic resource it is not available in leaflet form. Participants said:

‘Focus upon places so there’s digestible information.’

Young people said the information on the websites was too vague and by theming it according to ‘adventure’ or ‘heritage’ you had no idea where the different places were geographically, or how to get to them if you were from outside the area.

5. **Securing use of local spaces.** Project staff found it difficult finding contacts for local facilities. Additionally, once contact was made, it took some time for some phone calls or emails to be responded to. One village hall never replied to emails, some village websites did not work properly and no contact phone numbers were available. Facilitators appreciate that often village amenities such as halls are staffed by volunteers but not having easy contact with managers of Gower facilities cause barriers for groups of people who may need an affordable base when accessing Gower.

### **Barriers to being a part of decision making**

In addition to barriers to accessing Gower and its’ facilities, the Kites project also came across barriers that reduced levels of engagement. Barriers to engagement are not exhaustive and these barriers were identified by participants which may mean other engagement projects may experience similar stumbling blocks.

1. **Language and literacy levels.** Some of the Kites project participants had limited use of written English so funders monitoring forms required one to one facilitation and all methods had to be verbal rather than written.
2. **Fear of getting it wrong.** A minority of participants had a fear of getting planning wrong or of expressing their opinion in a group. This was overcome by using practical experience as a method for gaining knowledge and careful group facilitation.
3. **Lack of time effecting partnership working.** Lack of time affected the Kites project in two ways. Firstly we had very limited time for building partnership working with community members. Secondly, we did not have enough time to undertake substantial



partnership working with SBREC so there was not enough awareness of the activities we were undertaking with their service users.

4. **Lack of time effecting participants level of involvement.** The rushed programme of the kites project led to 2 drawbacks- firstly, we had to undertake kite making on the Friday of a bank holiday which is not generally good for attracting families. Secondly we were not as flexible as we would have liked. Participants and facilitators would have preferred to have arranged dates as the project progressed rather than had set times and places. We would also have liked to negotiate where we visited; for example, participants said they would have liked to see other areas and have chosen them according to the facilities available. Facilitators chose the three places because we had to provisionally book village halls prior to the project starting. A lack of time limited the depth of involvement.
5. **Lack of time effecting peer recruitment.** People recruit each other through word of mouth prior to a project starting. If there is not enough time participants of other projects do not know that their friends or peers are attending so it reduces numbers and interest.