



Report of the Cabinet Member for Investment Regeneration and Tourism

Tourism Scrutiny Working Group – 1st May 2019

TOURISM

Purpose:	To brief/update the Tourism Scrutiny Working Group
Content:	An overview of the marketing and development of tourism delivered by the Tourism and Marketing Team within Cultural Services.
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and to forward views to the Cabinet Member via a letter from the Panel Convener
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Robert Francis-Davies, Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Tourism Industry across the City and County of Swansea is made up of three distinct sub-destinations - Swansea (city) Mumbles (coastal) and Gower (coastal and rural). In marketing terms this forms part of a consumer facing marketing area called "Visit Swansea Bay" and which up until a few years back, also included Afan and Neath Valleys within the Neath Port Talbot County Borough area.
- 1.2 In marketing Visit Swansea Bay to our key geographic target markets, we work with over 124 marketing partners (mainly private sector). Each of whom buy into annual marketing packages, which helps them promote their business, whilst also generating approximately £42K income for the Council.
- 1.3 Our Marketing Partner Packages (**see appendix A**), vary in price, provide a range of marketing benefits and continue to develop year on year. The main benefits include an entry on the website www.visitswanseabay.com an opportunity to host journalists, display adverts in our Things to do, Beaches and Gower Coast Path publications, which in total amount to over 500,000

brochures and which are distributed across the destination, the region and key travel points of entry in England. An extension of that visitor information provision is an opportunity for the private sector to be part of our Visitor Information Point (VIP) network. A network we established following the closure of the Tourist Information Centre in March 2017 and which now has 25 businesses providing a visitor information provision as part of their core business.

- 1.4 In 2017 Tourism contributed *£417M to the local economy (**see Appendix B**). It resulted in 4.6m visitors being attracted across the year, which helped support 5,700 jobs – both direct and indirect. This makes tourism a major contributor to the local economy, with the potential to grow with the major investment planned for the Skyline inward investment project as well as the major regeneration plans for Hafod Copperworks, Mumbles Pier and the significant investment in our city centre.

*Source: Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model (STEAM)

2. What is being done to promote Swansea Bay as a tourist destination

- 2.1 The Tourism team continues to be innovative in the way that we market the destination. The marketing activity has transformed significantly in recent years, moving away from traditional approaches like the production and distribution of a holiday guide to a much greater focus on a digital strategy. The team has won a number of national awards for marketing and PR over the last 5 years.
2. We established a very strong brand identity in 2015 with the creation of the following brand guidelines. www.visitswanseabay.com/brand We are one of the few destinations in Wales to have a strategic brand and this sets out clear strategic marketing direction for the way we want to market the destination to our visitors. This is the consumer-facing brand that our visitors see and interact with both pre, during and post visit. However we do not lose sight of the role that the Council plays as a guardian of this brand on behalf of the private sector stakeholders.
- 2.2 Our marketing activity complements the national thematic campaigns led by Visit Wales and this year is the Year of Discovery. In support of that, we will be creating a variety of content, which includes, video, images, blogs, maintaining numerous websites, social media, attracting and hosting journalist's visits, outdoor media, as well as regular trade communications.
2. In 2018 as part of the Year of the Sea thematic year, we were successful in applying for Visit Wales Funding to run a "Surfari Bus" campaign. We worked with the private sector, hosted journalists, branded a campervan to take around the destination during the summer, before embarking on a tour of Wales and Ireland, further promoting the destination to our key target markets. This project exceeded all targets set and is regarded as an exemplar project by Visit Wales because of the in-Wales and Ireland focus of the marketing..
- 2.3 One of the key reasons why the private sector works with us, is the creative way we in which we market the destination. For example, when Swansea City

was in the Premier League, we led the way in the use of Infographics, which managed to lever significant social media coverage. Branding the Away Stand with images of Swansea Bay – raising awareness that there was more to Swansea than just the football in order to encourage repeat visits in the future. We continually adopt innovative marketing approaches and ensure that all our marketing is measureable, we also ensure that we share our marketing plans with our Marketing Partners.

- 2.4 Using feedback from our visitors and stakeholders we market the destination based on some product led marketing activity as well as using events as a driver for visits throughout the year. We know that people visit because of the natural environment including our beaches, coastline and to experience all of this via low level walking (up to 8 miles) along our section of the Wales Coastal path. Our cultural assets have long been a major driver for visits and our bid for City of Culture, whilst unsuccessful in one respect, did galvanise a large section of the cultural community in the city centre. This increased cultural product further support our other cultural icon, Dylan Thomas, whose work and significance to Wales is important to the overall marketing of Swansea.
 - 2.4 Our digital assets have also grown - to such an extent that we have one of the largest social media following in Wales for a tourism destination. This includes 75K Facebook likes, 15K followers on twitter, 2.5K on Instagram and 1.7M page views on www.visitswanseabay.com as well as managing campaign websites for <http://www.walesnationalairshow.com> <http://www.swanseabay10k.com> and <http://www.enjoyswanseabay.com>
 - 2.5 Our Outdoor Media and PR contracts have managed to secure some significant media attention in 2018/19 in both broadsheets and redtops, as well as their online versions generating over £1M of PR coverage. This is supported by outdoor media advertising opportunities in rail and underground train stations in key target markets areas.
- 3.0 What is being done to promote Wales as a tourist destination?**
- 3.1 Tourists and visitors spend more than £17 million a day in Wales, amounting to £6.3 billion a year, Visit Wales looks after tourism policy, encouraging investment and improving the quality of the visitor experience in Wales.
 - 3.2 Visit Wales is also responsible for marketing and deploys tourism campaigns as the main flag carrier for promotion of Wales in the domestic (UK) and international markets. Around 90% of Wales's visitors come from within the UK; and most of Visit Wales's promotional resources are focused on this market. However, international tourism is crucial to building Wales's general profile as well as a sustainable visitor economy.
 - 3.3 Since 2016, Visit Wales has focussed marketing effort around themed years. Adventure, Legends, Sea and Discovery respectively. In 2020 Outdoors will be the overarching theme and used to inform the planning of activity. The themed year approach helps to respond to key challenges when promoting Wales as a destination, including the long-term ambition to grow a stronger and more

defined brand for tourism in Wales and the need to drive an increase in visitor volume and value to Wales each year.

3.4 VisitWales.com, the national, multilingual tourism website, is curated and managed by Visit Wales. Marketing activity is closely aligned to product development and features major multi-channel and multi market campaign activity including

- Digital delivery e.g. paid search and social media marketing using content assets (film, imagery and editorial) deployed via behavioural targeting to key audiences
- Social Media – there are now over 1.5m followers on Visit Wales channels and sharing content represents a powerful tool for destinations to achieve additional reach
- TV and radio advertising and Video on Demand (VoD)
- Out of Home (OOH) advertising in key locations nationally and internationally
- Press and Media activity across Tier 1 and 2 titles as well as special interest publications (on and offline) and facilitation of journalist visits, often with assistance from stakeholder partners
- Business Events
- Cruise
- National and international work with the Travel Trade and via strategic partnerships (e.g. Qatar Airlines, KLM, Swansea City FC, Irish Ferries, Stena Line)

3.5 Visit Wales also works closely with Visit Britain to promote Wales internationally via collaborative consumer campaigns (B2C) and travel trade work (B2B).

4.0 **Strengths and weaknesses of Swansea Bay as a visitor destination**

4.1 Strengths

- Uniqueness of city, coast and countryside product all in close proximity of each other with good transport links.
- Established and effective working partnerships with internal and external stakeholders.
- A Destination Management Plan 'Destination Swansea Bay 2017-2020' approved by Cabinet and its associated Action Plan for delivery
- Level of expertise, experience and professionalism within the Tourism Team and which is recognised by the private sector.
- Major Event Programme continues to grow on the back of our ability to deliver

4.2 Weaknesses

- As a non-statutory service, we could be at risk of losing or incurring reduced budgetary support. Yet it's the only service which is proactively promoting Swansea in the absence of any strategic place marketing for Swansea
- Fragmentation of tourism community and lack of communication/integration between stakeholders.

- Need for better coordination of the “Tourism” related grant applications – both internally and externally

4.3 Opportunities

- The major inward investment projects and regeneration programmes e.g. the Digital Arena and Hotel in the city centre, Skyline and Penderyn and the plans for Mumbles Pier and headland.
- The transformation of the Tourism Team and digital approach to marketing will bring major benefits.
- Brexit may result in more staycations, growing the UK market potential for holidays and short breaks.

4.4 Threats

- The uncertainty that Brexit brings for businesses in terms of the overseas employees and the potential loss of overseas visitors.
- Continued decline in our marketing partners has the potential to reflect negatively on the product.

5.0 **Vision/strategy to promote/sustain tourism for next 5 to 10 years**

5.1 Our strategic approach to tourism can be demonstrated through the development and implementation of the Destination Management Plan (DMP), which was initially developed and then approved by Cabinet in 2014 with a vision to create a world-class tourism destination that delivers a high quality visitor experience in a quality, clean and well-maintained environment.
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/dmp>

The DMP is made up of internal and external stakeholders and focuses on 4 priorities:

- Partnership
- Increase quality
- All year round destination
- Ensure sustainability

5.2 The DMP has a steering group, chaired by the cabinet member with representatives from the private sector and Visit Wales/Welsh Govt. and meets twice per year. Reporting to the Steering group are two delivery groups focusing on Infrastructure & Public Realm and a group focussing on Marketing and Business Support. Over 100 organisations have been involved in the delivery of the plan so far.

5.3 Reduced resources has meant that there is just one 0.5 FTE post overseeing the wider destination impacts of tourism development. This proves to be a significant challenge and limits what we can do to further improve the development and coordination of tourism across the destination.

6.0 What is the business plan for putting this in place?

6.1 As mentioned in 5.2 the business plan or action plan (**See appendix C**) of the DMP is made up of two delivery groups and their actions are reported to the steering group.

7.0 Data on why people visit the area

7.1 The last visitor survey we conducted was in 2015 and helped inform the Destination Management Plan. The survey ran from April to September that year, with a sample of over 2000 people at 7 different sample points across the destination (City Centre/Marina, Mumbles & Gower). This was the first time we had conducted a visitor survey for this length of time and the results enabled us to better understand why people visited the area at different times of the year.

7.2 A profile of those visitors who visited Swansea Bay in 2015 is as follows

- Affluent 'Empty Nesters' aged 45+ years
- Affluent early retired couples aged 45+ years
- Younger affluent professionals aged 25 - 45 years
- Mid income families with children
- Hotel' is the main type of accommodation used
- The average length of stay for overnight visitors is 4.7 nights
- Where they come from (UK): Midlands, London, South East, M4 Corridor, West Country and other parts of Wales
- Main reasons to visit remain the coast/beaches and scenery/landscape
- Walking continues to be the main activity undertaken by visitors
- Overnight visitors spend an average of £500 during their stay, day visitors spend an average of £60
- 97% of visitors would recommend a visit to Swansea Bay

7.3 A company has been procured to conduct a visitor survey for 2019. This will run from April to October, to take in later Easter and half term school dates. There will be a smaller sample size this time round, but the same number of sample points. The results from the survey will influence the progress of the DMP and the findings will be reported to both delivery groups and the steering group in November 2019.

8.0 Findings/recommendations from previous Tourism Inquiry Panel - the follow up and any outstanding issues

The response of the cabinet member reporting to the Inquiry Panel looking at Tourism in Swansea was reported to cabinet on January 14th 2014. Of the 14 recommendations, all were agreed and the only recommendation, which has since been slightly modified, is the following

Recommendation 5

They ensure the Council, on a cross cutting basis, embraces the concept of the Visitor Economy as opposed to just Tourism

It was reported that three delivery groups were to be set up, but that has since changed and there are two delivery groups reporting to the steering group as reported in section 5.0 above.

9.0 Information on Benchmarking with the rest of the UK (Scotland, Ireland)

9.1 It was over 15 years ago when Swansea was part of Destination Partnership United Kingdom (DPUK) - a nationwide benchmarking group with the aim of grouping destinations by one of the following categories – Rural, Urban and Coastal. We were grouped in “Coastal 3 & 4” which saw Swansea benchmark its data against other destinations including Pembrokeshire, Bridgend, Hastings, Margate, Southport and Eastbourne (see **Appendix D**)

9.2 The principle of this approach was to establish baseline data for comparative purposes and there were numerous indicators applied to establish this. Unfortunately, after a few years of trying to establish a consistent approach, the responses continued to be so varied that it made it very difficult for those destinations within Coastal 3 & 4 to benchmark. The benchmarking group later disbanded.

9.3 Swansea is still a member of DPUK, which is an online forum of destinations which shares tourism marketing and development good practice information and intelligence.

10.0 Any other information the department thinks it would be useful for the Working Group to have.

10.1 There will be a short PowerPoint presentation to highlight some of the key marketing activity delivered by the team over the last 12 months.

11.0 Conclusions/Key Points Summary

11.1 The growth in tourism as modelled by STEAM since 2007 has demonstrated how the volume and value of Swansea Bay as a tourism destination has grown. Importantly, so too has the approach to destination marketing and development by the Council’s Tourism team, despite a reduction in FTE staff and resources.

11.2 The innovative approach to marketing and Marketing Partners has enabled us to maintain an excellent working relationship with over one hundred private sector partners year on year and ensure an income to offset the net cost of the service. However, it is unlikely that this can be sustained over the medium to longer term and we will have to transform our marketing proposition to respond to changing needs and expectations. We have adapted the way we work and have not been afraid to make tough decisions, and which, fortunately, have not had a detrimental effect on the destination.

11.3 The Destination Management Plan, continues to provide the strategic overview for tourism stakeholders and is an essential part of the capital and revenue grant applications to Welsh Government which insists that projects must be aligned to the Destination Management Plan. However, we need to look at strengthening the internal coordination of funding applications to ensure they make the strategic link and that funding bodies continue to also insist on the same approach.

Glossary of terms: Please add glossary of terms if you are using acronyms

Destination Management Plan – DMP

Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model – STEAM

Destination Partnership United Kingdom – DPUK

Background papers:

Appendices:

Appendix A – Marketing Partner Packages

Appendix B – STEAM Executive summary

Appendix C – Destination Management Plan – Action Plan

Appendix D – DPUK Membership list