



## Report of the Tourism Scrutiny Working Group

Cabinet – 18 July 2019

### Scrutiny Report on Tourism

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| <b>Purpose:</b>                    | This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations resulting from a Scrutiny Working Group on Tourism. Cabinet is required to consider the conclusions and recommendations and respond.  |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>           | Council Constitution   |
| <b>Consultation:</b>               | Access to Services, Legal and Finance  |
| <b>Recommendation(s):</b>          | It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Cabinet receives the report and tasks the relevant Cabinet Member to report back to a Cabinet meeting with a written response to the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Working Group and proposed action(s), for Cabinet decision.</li> </ol> |
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#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 A one-off Scrutiny Working Group to look at issues around Tourism was established by the Scrutiny Programme Committee. A small number of Working Groups are set up each year to carry out 'light-touch' examination of topics of importance and concern.
- 1.2 A cross-party group of scrutiny councillors were appointed by the Committee and met on 1 May to consider information, ask questions, and discuss Tourism. This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations resulting from the Scrutiny Working Group into Tourism, for Cabinet decision.

- 1.3 The convener of the Working Group, Councillor Peter Jones, will present the report and accompanying recommendations.
- 1.4 Cabinet should respond to the report within two months and provide an explanation for any recommendations that are not agreed.
- 1.5 The Scrutiny Programme Committee will be responsible for follow up and monitoring of agreed action with the relevant Cabinet Member during the course of its work.

## **2. What the Working Group Looked At**

### **2.1 The Working Group looked at:**

- Overview in terms of context
- What is being done to promote Wales as a tourist destination
- What is being done to promote Swansea Bay as a tourist destination
- What is the current picture
- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Vision/strategy to promote/sustain tourism for the next 5 to 10 years
- What is the business plan for putting this in place
- Data on why people visit the area
- Findings/recommendations from previous tourism inquiry and follow up and any outstanding issues
- Information on benchmarking with the rest of the UK (Scotland, Ireland)
- Any other information the department thinks it would be useful for the Working Group to consider.

2.2 The Working Group heard from the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism along with the Tourism and Marketing Manager and the Strategic Manager, Tourism, Marketing and Events. A written report was provided by the Cabinet Member for discussion.

2.3 The Working Group also received presentations on sustainable/eco-tourism from Officers from Gower AONB, Nature Conservation and Countryside Access teams.

## **3. Findings**

### **3.1 Sustainable / Eco-Tourism Presentations**

3.1.1 Chris Lindley, Gower AONB Team Leader, Deb Hill, Nature Conservation Team Leader and Chris Dale, Countryside Access Team Leader attended to present an overview of the work the Authority undertakes in relation to sustainable/eco-tourism.

### 3.1.2 The following main issues were discussed:

- Important to recognise the value of natural environment to tourism and the economy.
- As well as Gower, the River Tawe Corridor is also important to tourism. The Local Development Plan has just been agreed and includes access to riverbank along Tawe corridor.
- Working Group pleased to see how much hard work is being done by Authority.
- There is a lot more the Authority could do in relation to tourism if it had the resource but budget has been reduced by 50% in some areas over last 3 years. Department welcomes recommendations from scrutiny on things that can be done with minimum resource.
- Eco-tourism is very important for Gower. Working Group would like to see work on off-road cycling network brought forward. Estimated cost to do this is £50,000 (mostly in legal fees). Working Group recommends that money is found to fund production of a cycle map.
- All walking/cycling/trail riding routes are available on line.
- Signage in Gower could be better. It needs to be accurate and replaced if damaged or disappeared. There is lack of funding available for this work.
- Statutory duty to signpost footpaths/bridle paths. Members should inform Department if aware of signage issue for these areas and they will rectify.
- European Union is one of the biggest funders for this work. Uncertainty with grants after Brexit.
- More use should be made of volunteers to repair footpaths etc. This has already worked well in one area of Swansea.
- Important to have joined up way of recording and promoting everything going on in the area. Swansea Bay 'Surfari' campaign including campervan at Gower Show was very good. Ideas like this should be used more.
- In Llangollen, there is one number to ring to find out availability of accommodation and to contact hotels etc. There is a charge for using this line so it pays for itself. Would be a good idea for Swansea to do this, if it is not already.
- Would be good to have deck chairs back on Swansea beach. However, the issue of maintenance may be a problem.
- In terms of marketing eco-tourism opportunities, the Authority should make use of memberships of national organisations. Could look at establishing a group again with Natural Resources Wales and other national organisations represented.

## 3.2 Tourism Report and Presentation

3.2.1 Robert Francis-Davies, Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism; Steve Hopkins, Tourism and Marketing Manager and Frances Jenkins, Strategic Manager, Tourism, Marketing and Events attended to present an overview of marketing and development of tourism delivered by the Authority, based on the brief provided by the Working Group prior to the meeting, and answer the Working Group's questions.

### 3.2.2 The following main issues were discussed:

- Tourism and Marketing is a small team of four staff. They are focussing their marketing efforts on North West England, South West England, London and Birmingham.
- Need to ensure big events in Swansea are supported by all departments - emptying bins, cleaning up afterwards etc. as this affects people's opinions. There has to be a whole Council approach.
- Have to make Gower work as a tourist destination whilst still protecting the environment and recognising it is also a place where people live. It is not easy to get the balance right.
- The Skyline will be a big tourist attraction if it goes ahead. Signs are positive.
- A percentage of receipts from car park charges should be used to maintain the destination. However, the cost of car parking should not increase in order to fund local destinations as the cost of parking is a barrier to tourism.
- Working Group Members are happy to tweet tourism videos and put on their social media pages.
- Important for different types of accommodation to be made available in the area including pubs, bed and breakfasts, family run hotels and campsites. Should look at good practice from other areas with regards marketing of accommodation in Swansea
- Working Group would like to see more advertising like the 'EPIC' banner at Rhosilli last year. This 'viral' sort of advertising is good use of the budget.
- Marketing videos are good but could be longer and include more activities such as hiking/trail walking and the Copper Works.
- Department tends to focus on operators. Would be worth investigating using booking site that the Authority would receive commission from.
- Tourism is now an all-year-round business.
- Glamping pods are a good idea for extending the season.
- Access to and capacity of campsites on Gower is an issue.
- Working Group feels planning policies hinder tourism, for example, a campsite on Gower was asked to remove 'pods' as they did not meet some planning regulations, the owners of the campsite had to go through a long process to show they did meet planning regulations; There have been planning issues regarding access to Three Cliffs campsite. If we want to remain a tourist destination we need to change planning.
- Authority should use sites with large footfall all over City and County of Swansea to promote/advertise tourism in the area. Should look into using big screen more; using walls at entrances to Swansea Market to advertise local areas; displaying information at the Railway Station and the Quadrant Bus Station; and consider the possibility of pop ups on the main artery roads when arriving into Swansea.
- Authority needs to advertise cultural tourism in Swansea on different platforms such as videos.
- Need to work with BID in promoting tourism in Swansea.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 4.1 The Working Group was pleased to see how much hard work is being done by the Authority to promote tourism in the area. We feel that there is a lot more the Authority could do but recognise that this is restricted by the budget that has reduced drastically in recent years.
- 4.2 We feel it is important to recognise the value of the natural environment to tourism and the economy and recommend that:
  - a. Work on an off-road cycling network is brought forward and that money is found to fund the production of a cycling map for the area (estimated at £50,000, mostly in legal fees).
  - b. Consideration is given to making more use of volunteers to help maintain our environmental assets such as footpaths, steps etc. This is a valuable resource for the Authority and can be a great learning and social experience for volunteers.
- 4.3 The Working Group would like to see an improvement in signage especially in Gower. Many signs are missing or in need of repair. The Authority has a statutory duty to signpost footpaths and bridle paths and we would like people to be made aware that if the Department is informed of any signage issues for these areas they will rectify them.
- 4.4 We are concerned about funding post Brexit and recommend that a piece of work is undertaken to identify future grant funding possibilities.
- 4.5 We feel that the Authority should look at good practice from other areas regarding the marketing of accommodation in Swansea.
- 4.6 We recommend that the Authority explores introducing an information and availability phone line for holiday accommodation in the area. If this includes a booking system, and commission is charged, it could pay for itself.
- 4.7 We would like to see the Authority make use of the membership of national organisations to market eco-tourism in the area such as National Trust, RSPB etc.
- 4.8 We feel that there needs to be a 'whole council' approach to supporting big events in Swansea. Departments such as Refuse and Street Cleansing need to work with the Tourism team to ensure events run smoothly and everything is cleaned up afterwards.
- 4.9 We would like the Authority to consider ring-fencing a percentage of receipts from car parks to maintain the local destination, including maintaining and cleaning public facilities etc.
- 4.10 We would like marketing videos to show more of what people can do and see if they visit Swansea, such as walking/cycling in Gower and promotion of cultural tourism. We would also like to see more use of 'viral' types of advertising that have proved effective in the past and we would like to see

more use of sites with large footfall throughout Swansea to promote/advertise tourism in the area, such as the Market and Quadrant Bus Station.

- 4.11 Members of the Working Group are happy to promote tourism in Swansea through social media, by posting videos and tweeting links etc. We suggest all councillors are contacted, to ask if they will do the same.
- 4.12 We feel that scrutiny needs to look at this topic in more detail than can be done in a one-off working group. We will therefore recommend to the Scrutiny Programme Committee that Tourism is considered as a future scrutiny inquiry topic.

## **5. Equality and Engagement Implications**

5.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

Any recommendations agreed by Cabinet will be subject to the council's EIA process.

## **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 There is a financial implication to two recommendations in this report. Recommendation 4.2a - if accepted, the cost of production of a cycle map for the area is estimated at £50,000. Recommendation 4.9 – if accepted, would have a financial implication on how receipts from car parking are used. Any costs arising would need to come from existing resources or would be subject to the usual budget process for future years.

## **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no specific legal implications at this stage.

**Background Papers:** None.

**Appendices:** None.