

Scrutiny Inquiry into Tourism – Cabinet Action Plan

(NB Only include the recommendations agreed, in the action plan)

Recommendation		Action already being undertaken	New Action Proposed	Timescale	Responsible Officer
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.	Over the last 3 years, we have been working towards a 50% reduction in budget. This has resulted in the closure of the Tourist Information Centre (2016) and the refocussing of activity in line with a digital strategy, which will increase more web visits, increase social media followers and engagement and capture additional segmented and profiled email addresses.	Having just reviewed the Destination Management Plan (DMP), one of the recommendations is to ensure greater input from those Heads of Service whose service areas play an important role in the management of the destination. These will be invited to future steering group meetings. Cabinet Member comment: 'Consider how a Tourism Strategy may also be introduced, working alongside the current DMP.'	2020/21	Steve Hopkins
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	The Council has a duty under the Environment (Wales) Act to 'maintain and enhance biodiversity' and to 'promote the resilience of ecosystems'. Each	In response to the specific recommendations: a) off-road cycling network and map:	2020-onwards	Chris Dale

	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.	Council function / Service Area should now be considering where and how they can achieve this through their service/business plans. The Corporate Biodiversity working group will provide a vehicle for raising awareness and encouraging best practice. The natural environment plays an important role in tourism and consistently comes up as one of the main reasons why people visit our area. As such, sustainability is one of the four key priorities in the Destination Management Plan and the Tourism Team encourages responsible tourism throughout our marketing activity, e.g. recycling, reducing ecological footprint, sustainable transport, walking/cycling, using local produce, etc.	We've previously investigated this but Active Travel money cannot be used for non-urban routes. The possibility of a Gower off-road cycle route is at early stages of consideration. This project would develop and promote a network of bridleways as a way of enjoying the countryside by bike. It would enable visitors to explore large areas of Gower AONB by bicycle and cross much of the landscape including the high points of all the major hills. There would however be some unavoidable short road sections. It is estimated the cost of the initial phases including physical works, legal processes, landowner compensation, etc. would cost £26,000. There is currently no budget available for such works, so grant funding will need to be identified, but it unlikely to cover full costs and future management		
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			implications. b) volunteers to help maintain environmental assets The Council already uses volunteers, for example the Ramblers, for such purposes. However, active, committed volunteers are only one part of a solution to meeting the demands of the service currently, which also includes equipment, supervision, training and transport costs. Even if the number of volunteers and volunteer days was doubled, the impact on the amount of maintenance needed would be minimal and so we are not in a position to increase our responsibilities as a result. However, the Service is in the process of appointing a Welsh Government funded, volunteer coordinator, to increase the number of volunteer projects undertaken and we welcome the support to	2020/23	Deb Hill
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			promote this, within the context of the information above. Recommendation is Partly Agreed to investigate grant funding for the network and increase the recruitment of volunteers		
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.	Regarding different signage: Highways signage – a comprehensive audit was conducted a few years ago in partnership with Highways. Findings were forwarded to maintenance team for repairs / replacement. Some improvements still outstanding due to lack of budget to address all issues. Footpaths / bridleways signage – it is a statutory duty of the Council's Countryside Access Team to rectify any signage issues with footpaths and bridleways. However signage is only appropriate where the footpath or bridleway is	Await the findings of the 2019 visitor and trade surveys to see if there are issues with highways signage. Highways signage: consider another strategic audit for 2020 if resources could be ring-fenced for any identified improvements and repairs. Consider a site-specific, co-ordinated approach to signage between the various Council teams and allocate responsibility/pool resources for on-going maintenance. Cabinet Member comments: 'Consider funding application and	2020/21	Relevant Council Officers from Place Directorate depending on nature of signage (e.g. Highways, Cultural Services and Regeneration)

		fully accessible, i.e. maintained in a good condition. Due to reduced maintenance budget and grant availability the number of footpaths and bridleways the Council is able to maintain in a good condition is decreasing every year. Waymarks Fingerposts – an audit was conducted 2 years ago at various Council-run beaches and a rolling programme is in place to repair/replace the wooden fingerposts on the seafront as and when budget becomes available. Langland Bay was completed this year and Caswell is to follow. Statutory Signage – e.g. dog ban, water quality, bye-laws, restrictions, planning notices, etc. Promotional / Interpretation Signage – e.g. Blue Flags, Lobster Campaign, Smoke-free Beaches, safety messages, etc.	opportunity for policy commitments to resource signage improvement.' Recommendation is AGREED subject to budget constraints		
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		Signage ‘clutter’ is a recurring issue across the destination, however it becomes more evident in the traditional hotspots such as Port Eynon for example, where a lot of different signs have been erected over the years but not removed (where relevant) or maintained (where needed). This is mainly due to the fact that signage, (as outlined above) has varying functions across different services and each with reduced or zero resources to apply a coordinated approach to ongoing maintenance or replacement.			
4.	We are concerned about funding post Brexit and recommend that a piece of work is undertaken to identify future grant funding possibilities.	The Economic Development and External Funding Team subscribes to an online grants database and continually monitors available grant and loan funding opportunities. There is a need for continued engagement with Welsh Government to influence the shape of tourism funding post	Explore innovative funding and investment strategies and borrow prudently to support the City Deal, only when it is right to do so. Implement a joined up approach to all public expenditure and the use of buildings and resources to ensure we can continue to do more with less and can seek	2020/21	Paul Relf

		Brexit, and to explore partnership funding models where other organisations may be in a better position to bid for funding but with the backing and support of the Council. There is some success already with this approach, e.g. Hafod Copperworks Musgrave Engine House project working with Swansea University and Friends of Hafod-Morfa Copperworks. External funding from EU sources has been decreasing as a percentage of overall external funding secured in recent years. The City Deal and regeneration of Hafod Copperworks remain a key priority for the Council in improving economic wellbeing and tourism in the area.	the wider and more imaginative community use of public assets, such as Council-owned buildings. Continue to explore collaborative and innovative ways in which local services can be financed and delivered most efficiently, and how the value of council assets can be maximised. In any new DMP action plan, ED&EFT to review actions and identify potential funding streams Continue engagement with Welsh Government to influence shape of tourism funding post Brexit Explore potential partnership funding models for future projects.		
5.	We feel that the Authority should look at good practice from other areas regarding the marketing of accommodation in Swansea.	The accommodation sector is part of a destination's overall tourism offer and is intrinsically linked to	Research the arrangements that other LA's in Wales have with their businesses who want to promote their	2020/21	Steve Hopkins

		other elements such as activities, attractions, food & drinks and major events. Our marketing campaigns focus on promoting the destination as a whole rather than just the accommodation sector. However, we do have a comprehensive 'Where To Stay' section on the official tourism website with 56 listed private sector accommodation providers (e.g. hotels, B&Bs, hostels, caravan and camping sites, etc.). These are businesses/organisations who buy into a yearly marketing package with the Council, i.e. Visit Swansea Bay Marketing Partners. Our current requirement is that all accommodation operators on the tourism website must be inspected and graded/listed with either VisitWales or The AA.	services with them. Review our current requirement to only accept graded properties on our tourism website and consider a policy statement for this. Report the findings of the visitor and trade surveys to relevant Cabinet Members and the DMP Steering Group.		
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		Although this provides re-assurance to visitors and a level of protection for the Council in case of a complaint, this also restricts the number of businesses that can be recruited as Marketing Partners. It also doesn't reflect the way visitors now search for accommodation i.e. they search for brands, recommendations and increasingly, through the sharing economy. Some operators, whether graded or not, choose to promote their property through other, unregulated sharing economy networks such as Airbnb or local private websites (e.g. gower.com). We already undertake regular benchmarking exercises to assess how other comparable destinations market themselves and also exchange good practice e.g. through BRADA (British Resorts and Destinations Association) of which we			
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		are members. A few years ago, we also worked with Visit Wales in appointing a consultancy to undertake an Accommodation Demand Study. This work has informed some of the most recent hotel developments in the City Centre. STEAM figures and occupancy figures are also a good benchmark to determine how Swansea compares to the Welsh average and other destinations. Swansea occupancy figures for serviced accommodation, for example, are consistently higher than the Wales average and the STEAM figures demonstrate continuous growth. Regular visitor surveys give us an insight into who our visitors are, where they come from, where they stay, how they booked their holiday, how much they			
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		spent, whether they are satisfied with their visit and likely to visit again and/or recommend us to others. We are able to use this intelligence to target our marketing activity more effectively. We are also planning a tourism trade survey for this Autumn to benchmark destination performance against the 2012 findings. Questions revolve mainly around destination management issues.			
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.	Events are a key driver of Tourism. The Special Events Team currently works closely with several other Council departments / teams in order to deliver safe and enjoyable events across the City and County. These include Council organised events and those run by the private sector. For example: Highways – road closures, traffic plans, event parking, enforcement, Park & Ride	That the Special Events Team within Cultural Services acts as the first and single point of contact for events and event organisers in relation to the delivery of events and event management enquiries. The delivery of events in public spaces is a cross cutting activity involving all relevant departments as part of our ongoing ability to deliver on the Council's priority of transforming our economy and	2020/21	David Price-Deer

		Parks & Cleansing – event site preparation & reparation; litter collection, recycling Public Health – food safety, event licensing Legal – events contracts and indemnities Communications – corporate press and social media support Health & Safety – emergency management and contingency planning Cultural Services Marketing & Tourism team undertake the event marketing activity to residents and visitors.	infrastructure, inclusion and wellbeing factors. Endeavouring to ensure that associated new developments or major events take into account sustainable development principles where possible and, where feasible, mitigating actions are developed regarding sustainability.		
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	Our marketing activity targets potential visitors from outside of Wales, therefore it is not always visible to Swansea residents. We already have a range of promotional videos produced to market the destination,	New videos are already planned for 2020 ‘Year of the Great Outdoors’ however, a strong commitment to continue with this strategy for 2021 and beyond will be vital as Tourism is the only section within the Council, which proactively place-	2020/21	Steve Hopkins

	tourism in the area, such as the Market and Quadrant Bus Station.	which can be viewed on our YouTube channel at: www.youtube.com/user/visitswanseabayTV Our videos are produced in a number of formats so that they can become viral, shared by our partners and are often produced in such a way that they can have a number of different uses. These videos are promoted online via the tourism website, social media and email marketing to our targeted audiences. This is one of many channels we use to promote the 130 private sector Partners, who have signed up to yearly marketing packages with us. Our digital content focusses on the main reasons why people visit Swansea Bay, which are the key findings of our visitor survey, i.e. beaches, natural landscape and our coastline.	markets the destination.		
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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.	We have existing channels that both businesses and consumers follow to receive information, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, e-newsletters, etc. We post regular updates and generate a high level of engagement with our audiences.	To identify and share with all members the digital channels they can follow and sign up to, so they can assist in the promotion of the destination.	2020/21	Steve Hopkins
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.	We have presented to scrutiny inquiries in 2014 and 2019 and welcome any further opportunities to raise the profile of Tourism and its importance to the local economy, Council priorities, Welsh Government priorities and the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.	Whilst we would be happy to be part of a future topic, the real challenge lies in ensuring that a tourism strategy for the destination is developed and integrated alongside other council strategies and policies. An ideal starting point for this, at a time when the national strategy is being reviewed, is to present the work of the tourism team to the Policy Development Committee (PDC).	2020/23	Steve Hopkins