

Appendix A

Scrutiny Working Group on Tourism – Cabinet Member Response and Action Plan (November 2019, revisited July 2021)

Key to officer references:

Cultural Services: Tourism – Steve Hopkins (SH), Special Events – David Price-Deer (DPD)

Highways & Transportation: Highways – Mark Thomas (MT), Transportation – Chloe Lewis (CL)

Regeneration: Nature Conservation – Deb Hill (DH), Countryside Access – Chris Dale (CD), External Funding Team – Paul Relf (PR)

	Recommendation	Action already being undertaken	New Action Proposed	Timescale / Responsible Officer	Update July 2021
1	<p>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.</p>	<p>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 re-focusing 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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Cabinet Member comment: 'Consider how a Tourism Strategy may also be introduced, working alongside the current DMP.'</p>	<p>2020/21 SH</p>	<p>The DMP Steering Group now includes Head of Services for Cultural Services (Tracey McNulty) as well as Regeneration and Planning (Phil Holmes) along with private sector and Welsh Government representatives to discuss cross-cutting issues and give update of respective areas of work.</p> <p>The DMP Steering Group has met more frequently during the pandemic.</p> <p>The Destination Management Plan 2017-2020 has now expired and been replaced with a Tourism Recovery Action Plan 2021-22.</p>
2	<p>We feel it is important to recognise the value of the natural environment to</p>	<p>The Council has a duty under the Environment (Wales) Act to 'maintain and</p>	<p>In response to the specific recommendations:</p>	<p>2020-Onwards</p>	<p>Update on specific recommendations:</p>

			<p>to cover full costs and future management implications.</p> <p>b) volunteers to help maintain environmental assets</p> <p>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</p>	<p>DH</p>	<p>work on this programme this year. The larger issue again however, is that this is funded by the Active Travel Fund, and must therefore focus on utility journeys to encourage modal shift for everyday journeys to be undertaken by walking or cycling.</p> <p>Similarly, funding from the Active Travel Fund has resulted in the production of a Swansea Bayways route map focusing on the defined network in the built-up area of Swansea, with routes generally only displayed that are compliant with Active Travel Design Standards.</p> <p>b. Network of volunteers / recruitment</p> <p>The activities of the Swansea Wildlife Volunteers group (led by the Council) have been on hold due to lack of staff resources to supervise and the constraints imposed by COVID. We are still awaiting the outcome of a Welsh Government ENRAW grant which, if approved, will fund a part time Volunteer Co-ordinator post for 2 years and enable us to re activate this Volunteer group.</p> <p>The Nature Conservation Team have now employed a permanent part time Biodiversity Officer (Mark</p>
--	--	--	---	-----------	---

			<p>and we welcome the support to promote this, within the context of the information above.</p> <p>Recommendation is Partly Agreed to investigate grant funding for the network and increase the recruitment of volunteers.</p>		<p>Barber) to work across the Authority providing advice and support to ensure that all Council service areas understand and are compliant with their duty under the Environment (Wales) Act to 'maintain and enhance biodiversity' and to 'promote the resilience of ecosystems'. A Corporate Climate and Nature working group has been established to co-ordinate and monitor progress with this work.</p>
3	<p>The Working Group would like to see an improvement in signage especially in Gower.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Regarding different signage:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 fully accessible, i.e. maintained in a good condition. Due to</p>	<p>Await the findings of the 2019 visitor and trade surveys to see if there are issues with highways signage.</p> <p>Highways signage: consider another strategic audit for 2020 if resources could be ring-fenced for any identified improvements and repairs.</p> <p>Consider a site-specific, co-ordinated approach to signage between the various Council teams and allocate responsibility/pool resources for on-going maintenance.</p> <p>Cabinet Member comments:</p>	<p>2020/21</p> <p>Various Officers from Place Directorate depending on nature of signage</p> <p>MT</p> <p>SH</p>	<p>According to the 2019 Visitor Survey, fewer visitors rated both the standard of tourist signposting (pedestrian and road signs) as 'good or excellent' in 2019 when compared with the same survey undertaken in 2015: From 89% to 81% for pedestrian signs and from 86% to 79% for road signs.</p> <p>2020 highways signage audit has not been possible due to Covid and there are currently no proposals within Highways for signage improvements. However, any defects or missing Highways signs are reported by staff, inspectors or members of the public and signs are repaired or replaced as appropriate.</p> <p>Signage clutter at some of the beaches (e.g. Caswell) is being looked at as part of the Beaches Management Group or specific</p>

		<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Statutory Signage – e.g. dog ban, water quality, bye-laws, restrictions, planning notices, etc.</p> <p>Promotional / Interpretation Signage – e.g. Blue Flags, Lobster Campaign, Smoke-free Beaches, safety messages, etc.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>‘Consider funding application and opportunity for policy commitments to resource signage improvement.’</p> <p>Recommendation is AGREED subject to budget constraints</p>	<p>CD</p>	<p>improvement schemes (e.g. Port Eynon).</p> <p>Footpaths / bridleways signage, waymarks and fingerposts on promoted routes have been checked over the past year and a photographic record of the condition of signage, waymarks and other features completed. A programme of repairs is being rolled out.</p>
--	--	---	---	-----------	---

		(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.	<p>The Economic Development and External Funding Team subscribes to an online grants database and continually monitors available grant and loan funding opportunities.</p> <p>There is a need for continued engagement with Welsh Government to influence the shape of tourism funding post 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.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Explore innovative funding and investment strategies and borrow prudently to support the City Deal, only when it is right to do so.</p> <p>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 the wider and more imaginative community use of public assets, such as Council-owned buildings.</p> <p>Continue to explore collaborative and innovative ways in which local services can be financed and delivered most</p>	2020-2022 PR	<p>Regen (Economic Development continues to work closely with colleagues in Welsh Government to help inform the shape of new funding opportunities based on regular internal dialogue within the Council and with external partners through Regeneration Swansea Partnership and other relevant fora.</p> <p>This ensures we are able to respond quickly to new opportunities which include capital and revenue funding through Welsh Government Transforming Towns, CADW, Visit Wales, Economy and Transport, UK Government Levelling up and community renewal. Also working with community development and others on external funding opportunities for smaller schemes cross-county, e.g. Brilliant Basics, Transforming Towns, Wales Tourism Investment Fund.</p>

		<p>sources has been decreasing as a percentage of overall external funding secured in recent years.</p> <p>The City Deal and regeneration of Hafod Copperworks remain a key priority for the Council in improving economic wellbeing and tourism in the area.</p>	<p>efficiently, and how the value of council assets can be maximised.</p> <p>In any new DMP action plan, ED&EFT to review actions and identify potential funding streams</p> <p>Continue engagement with Welsh Government to influence shape of tourism funding post Brexit</p> <p>Explore potential partnership funding models for future projects.</p>		<p>The Economic Recovery Plan has been a key informer of new funding opportunities and underlines the essential link between economic development and tourism development.</p>
5	<p>We feel that the Authority should look at good practice from other areas regarding the marketing of accommodation in Swansea.</p>	<p>The accommodation sector is part of a destination's overall tourism offer and is intrinsically linked to other elements such as activities, attractions, food & drinks and major events.</p> <p>Our marketing campaigns focus on promoting the destination as a whole rather than just the accommodation sector.</p> <p>However, we do have a comprehensive 'Where To Stay' section on the official tourism website with 56 listed</p>	<p>Research the arrangements that other LA's in Wales have with their businesses who want to promote their services with them.</p> <p>Review our current requirement to only accept graded properties on our tourism website and consider a policy statement for this.</p> <p>Report the findings of the visitor and trade</p>	<p>2020/21</p> <p>SH</p>	<p>CCS only LA in SWW to make it compulsory for accommodation operators to be listed / graded with Visit Wales before they can advertise on the official website. Other LAs only request basic details such as proof of public liability or having their own website. Whilst it is possible that this may have had a detrimental effect on our ability to recruit from a wider pool of businesses previously, following the Coronavirus pandemic the landscape has now changed as price is no longer a barrier – please see below.</p> <p>The Marketing Partner Package</p>

		<p>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.</p> <p>Our current requirements is that all accommodation operators on the tourism website must be inspected and graded/listed with either Visit Wales or The AA.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>surveys to relevant Cabinet Members and the DMP Steering Group.</p>	<p>which local tourism businesses purchased was refunded for 2020-21 as part of the Council's support of the tourism sector.</p> <p>In order to continue to support business recovery in 2021/22, a free entry level package is being offered to tourism businesses (additional opportunities to purchase are also available).</p> <p>As a result, our accommodation Partners have increased by 23. The total number of new Partners is 63, so 185 tourism businesses are now promoted on visitswanseabay.com and across our marketing campaigns.</p> <p>In addition, Visit Wales are now offering free grading for all businesses, which has removed another barrier to participation (for accommodation operators) whilst enabling us to maintain an accredited accommodation listing on the website.</p> <p>Findings from the 2019 Visitor Survey have been presented to the DMP Steering Group, to the trade via a face-to-face event (Jan 2020) and published on the tourism trade website.</p> <p>The trade survey was cancelled due to pandemic and the number of surveys already being targeted at the trade during</p>
--	--	---	--	---

		<p>gower.com).</p> <p>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 are members.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Regular visitor surveys give</p>		<p>various lockdowns. It is likely to be rescheduled in 2022.</p>
--	--	---	--	---

		<p>us an insight into who our visitors are, where they come from, where they stay, how they booked their holiday, how much they 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.</p> <p>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.</p>			
8	<p>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.</p>	<p>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:</p> <p>Highways – road closures, traffic plans, event parking, enforcement, Park & Ride</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>The delivery of events in public spaces is a cross-cutting activity involving all relevant departments as part of our ongoing ability to</p>	2020/21 DPD	<p>The Events Team in Cultural Services has been supporting businesses since very early on in the pandemic - key areas have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with several local businesses to deliver the highly successful Swansea Bay Pop-Up. Not only this did the facility provide a much needed outdoor F&B facility welcomed by members of the public, but it also enabled those businesses to retain a significant number of their employees and supply chains.

		<p>Parks & Cleansing – event site preparation & repair; litter collection, recycling</p> <p>Public Health – food safety, event licensing</p> <p>Legal – events contracts and indemnities</p> <p>Communications – corporate press and social media support</p> <p>Health & Safety – emergency management and contingency planning</p> <p>Cultural Services Marketing & Tourism team undertake the event marketing activity to residents and visitors.</p>	<p>deliver on the Council's priority of transforming our economy and infrastructure, inclusion and wellbeing factors.</p> <p>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.</p>		<p>The companies involved had limited experience of operating a business of this nature in an outdoor environment and in the current situation. The Team supported the operators from the outset to facilitate the use of Singleton Park, working with them to review general safety and operational plans, advising on suitable suppliers, engaging with stakeholders and of course ensuring delivery in a Covid safe manner in line with the frequently changing Welsh Government Guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Mumbles, the Events team continues to support local operators in providing managed outdoor seating facilities within Southend Gardens and other green open spaces. The Team supported the businesses (and continues to support them) in order to ensure the activities are well managed and delivered in a safe and compliant manner. • Within the City Centre, the Events team has supported other Council services with guidance on a range of logistical issues e.g. external queuing, seating areas etc. in order to enable business to open externally. • Additionally, the Events team
--	--	--	--	--	---

				<p>has facilitated all requests for outdoor public space through the Events Letting Process (a single point of contact within the Council) and provided advice to a range of businesses regarding safe outdoor business operations.</p> <p>In all instances, the Events team has provided advice regarding how these outdoor activities should be delivered, in line with best practice, developing plans and recommending infrastructure and suppliers where applicable to enable businesses to operate externally in a Covid safe manner.</p> <p>Moving forward the Team is hopeful of returning to delivering a full programme of events. This programme will be enhanced in future years in line with the Council's Economic Recovery Plan</p> <p>The team is working with other stakeholders on the exciting Copr Bae development - in particular the installation and operation of the new digital assets (Arena Skin, Shop Front Architectural lighting, etc.). The team is also supporting the delivery of the City Centre Arts Strategy which includes new event and meanwhile spaces that are emerging as part of the city centre regeneration.</p>
--	--	--	--	---

					The Team continues to support an ever increasing demand for the use of outdoor space (dance classes, choir practice, etc.) - including booking administration, safety advice and compliance in line with legislation and best practice.
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.	<p>Our marketing activity targets potential visitors from outside of Wales, therefore it is not always visible to Swansea residents.</p> <p>We already have a range of promotional videos produced to market the destination, which can be viewed on our YouTube channel at: www.youtube.com/user/visitswanseabayTV</p> <p>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.</p> <p>These videos are promoted online via the tourism website, social media and email marketing to our targeted audiences. This is one of the many channels we use to promote the 130 private sector Partners, who</p>	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-markets the destination.	2020/21 SH	<p>Online channels (social media, YouTube and the destination website visitswanseabay.com) were crucial in continuing to communicate with our customers during the Coronavirus pandemic. Video content played a key role in engaging with our existing audience and building a new relationship with future potential visitors.</p> <p>During periods of lockdown and changing travel restrictions, attractive videos of the destination enabled us to broadcast the 'Stay Home' request in a softer way by reminding our audience of the positive aspects of the destination at the same time as delivering our 'Visit Swansea Bay. Later.' message.</p> <p>At the height of the pandemic 971,000 video views were achieved overall.</p> <p>Travel restrictions eased and we launched a new #HappyPlace</p>

		<p>have signed up to yearly marketing packages with us.</p> <p>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.</p>		<p>spring campaign with two new videos encouraging responsible visits to the destination. These showcased our coastline, countryside and the wide variety of things to do in the area to support our local tourism businesses on re-opening.</p> <p>This campaign is ongoing but to date, during 2021, we have already achieved 962,119 video views and over 95% of the whole video is watched.</p> <p>The <u>first #HappyPlace video</u> has reached 292,045 YouTube views alone and is the most watched video that we have produced.</p> <p>The #HappyPlace campaign will continue through summer and into the autumn/winter to extend the staycation season and support businesses even further.</p> <p>All recent videos can be viewed <u>HERE</u> on our YouTube channel and are either produced in a Welsh and English version or are bilingual.</p> <p>Eight new videos are in production. Highlighting our Coast, Countryside, City and Dog-Friendly Holidays. We've worked with our Partners to feature local tourism businesses in all the videos, but the new videos will also feature</p>
--	--	--	--	--

					businesses showing our audience what makes Swansea Bay their #HappyPlace.
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.	<p>We have existing channels that both businesses and consumers follow to receive information, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, e-newsletters, etc.</p> <p>We post regular updates and generate a high level of engagement with our audiences.</p>	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 SH	<p>Official destination website: www.visitswanseabay.com</p> <p>Facebook (81.8k likes)</p> <p>Twitter (17.1k followers)</p> <p>Instagram (5.3k followers)</p> <p>YouTube channel</p> <p><i>Engagement figures can be found in the main report.</i></p>
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 SH	Tourism presented to PDC in October 2019.