

Cllr. Peter Black
Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

(By email)

Please ask for: Cllr Robert Francis-Davies

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Our Ref: RFD/JG

Your Ref:

Date: 18 October 2021

Dear Cllr. Black,

Re: Scrutiny Programme Committee – Tourism Response to Letter dated 30th September 2021 to Cllr Robert Francis-Davies

Response to Follow-up Questions:

We asked you to revisit in particular our recommendation seven relating to the promotion of eco-tourism, which suggested working with national and local environmental organisations to find ways to attract their memberships.

1. The Tourism Team and other Council departments (in particular the Countryside and Rights of Way Team), have a positive relationship with the National Trust (NT), working to fundamentally common aims to protect and conserve the landscape, while supporting the community and local economy. During the pandemic and into the recovery period, the aim has been to encourage visits to the countryside responsibly and we have worked in synergy with the aims of Welsh Government and NT to achieve this in areas of high footfall, for example Rhossili on Gower.
2. In addition to the NT, we also have links with South & West Wales Wildlife Trust, Wales Coast Path, Keep Wales Tidy and on a regional basis, the National Parks.
3. We can explore working with national wildlife, nature and environmental organisations and ascertain the costs of accessing their marketing platforms, e.g. online platforms, print and membership communications in the past we have featured in National Geographic Travel, BBC Countryfile and Country Walking platforms – both online and in print.
4. Continue working with other council departments (Countryside, Rights of Way) and local organisations to develop collaborative content e.g. nature trails, bird-spotting information and family orientated nature activities.

We welcome action on improving our environmental messaging to attract visitors, potentially a quick win on the back of an increasing interest and concern in the climate, nature and biodiversity.

1. Develop new wildlife, nature and eco content for www.visitswanseabay.com.
2. Develop a new campaign which leads on this theme, using videos and new images. Research the possibility of an environment/wildlife professional or celebrity becoming the 'face' of the campaign and appear in the videos.
3. Encourage our local tourism businesses to develop facets of their business which relate to this theme, e.g. accommodation providers turning over a part of their garden to wildflowers, putting up a bird box, or just feeding birds to attract wildlife to their business premises. Food & drink businesses could advertise their hyper-locally sourced food or even grow some of their own. Attractions/activity providers could also use this theme in relation to their activities, e.g. Plantasia and their conservation work, or watersport operators highlighting the nature opportunities where they operate.

The potential to promote eco-tourism and access to Penclawdd / North Gower, encouraging cycling from the railway station at Gowerton.

1. Colleagues in the Transportation Team inform us that there is not currently a continuous off-road cycle route between Gowerton and Penclawdd, therefore this route is not signposted. Cyclists can travel between these two locations, however with no dedicated cycle provision, it would be on-road. The delivery of a continuous off-road route here in the future is part of the council's adopted Integrated Network Map (INM), listed as a proposed future route. It is anticipated that the council will seek funding to progress feasibility and design of this route in the future under the Active Travel Fund.
There is currently no funding available for the general promotion of active travel, and when funding was received from Welsh Government in the past, it was focused on utility journeys only (not leisure), in accordance with the purpose of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.
2. Swansea Council continues to provide hard copy maps and digital maps of the cycle network. See www.swansea.gov.uk/cycling
3. The Tourism Team feature North Gower in their campaign activity (featuring in campaign videos and photography) in an effort to encourage visitors to explore different areas of the destination to relieve the pressure on some of the visitor 'hotspots' like Rhossili and Three Cliffs Bay.

We also welcomed any possible expansion of cycle hire facilities across Swansea.

1. Colleagues in the Transportation Team inform us that Swansea Council recently submitted a funding application to the Welsh Government to expand the provision of cycle hire facilities in Swansea, unfortunately this grant application was not successful. However the council will continue to investigate alternative options and seek funding where possible.
2. However, [cycle hire opportunities](#) currently available are featured as part of the visitor and resident cycling offer on visitswanseabay.com

It would also be useful if there were accessible maps of our main footpaths for people to explore Swansea and enjoy a green holiday

1. Colleagues in the Rights of Way Team inform us that detailed walking maps showing the footpaths and bridleways in Swansea (and the rest of the UK) are available to purchase from Ordnance Survey.
2. In addition to the above, extensive walking information and promoted routes are available to view, download or print from the Council website for free.

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/walking>


3. There is a comprehensive walking section on [visitswanseabay.com](https://www.visitswanseabay.com) which is aimed at the visitor market, which highlights walking routes across the destination including Gower and North Swansea

<https://www.visitswanseabay.com/walking-in-swansea-mumbles-gower/>

One of the recommendations also called for the development of a Gower off-road cycling network and cycling map for the area. We can see from the update that work has been carried out to develop and promote a network of bridleways as a way of enjoying the countryside by bike that will enable visitors to explore large areas of Gower AONB by bicycle. A map of routes is in the process of being prepared. We noted that the scheme has been limited due to legal issues with landowners but will still be extensive. More information about progress would be appreciated, including whether we were successful in obtaining grant funding to support this work.

1. Colleagues in the Rights of Way Team inform us that the Gower off-road cycling project is nearing completion. RDP funding was secured to produce a leaflet, which is currently at draft stage and awaiting approval from Welsh Government.
2. Due to objections from Gower residents, the network has been reduced to avoid certain areas of the AONB, however it will still cover a large part of west Gower. The Council is no longer pursuing the legal issues with landowners.
3. However, the network of shared routes now available to cyclists on Gower is extensive and offers a refreshing change of pace and terrain to our other cycling routes including the new Active Travel routes and the existing National Cycle Network routes (4 and 43).
4. When available, the off road cycling network leaflet will be available to download on [visitswanseabay.com](https://www.visitswanseabay.com).

Yours sincerely



**Y CYNGHORYDD/COUNCILLOR ROBERT FRANCIS-DAVIES
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