



Report of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism
Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel
23 January 2023

Briefing on the Destination Management Plan

Purpose	To brief/update the Panel on the Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Swansea, in particular the plan's priorities, achievements so far and progress with delivery.
Content	The report sets out the context in which the concept of Destination Management Plans originated, an overview of the DMP 2017-2020 (including its vision, priorities, delivery structure and key achievements), the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the tourism industry, the 2021-2022 Tourism Recovery Action Plan (incl. strategic priorities and key achievements during the pandemic), the Tourism Team's activity in 2022 (post-Covid recovery period), an overview of the 2022 Tourism Trade Survey findings and what is proposed for the DMP 2023-25.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided and give views
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1. Background

The Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel has requested to look at the Destination Management Plan, in particular the Plan's priorities, achievements so far and progress with delivery.

This report sets out the context in which the concept of Destination Management Plans originated, an overview of the DMP 2017-2020 (including its vision, priorities, delivery structure and key achievements), the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the tourism industry, the 2021-2022 Tourism Recovery Action Plan (incl. strategic priorities and key achievements during the pandemic), the Tourism Team's activity in 2022 (post-Covid recovery period), an extract of the findings from the 2022 Tourism Trade Survey and what is proposed for the DMP 2023-25.

2. Destination Management Plan 2017-2020

2.1 Context

Welsh Government require all Local Authorities in Wales to produce a DMP setting out their priorities as a visitor destination. The plan should form part of the Council-wide strategies and regeneration plans.

DMPs highlight the importance of tourism to the local economy and can act as catalysts for unlocking Government funding schemes.

DMPs can also foster effective working relationships between public and private sectors, and address short-term and long-term issues within the destination.

Swansea Council first introduced a DMP in 2013. This Plan was approved by Cabinet and delivered over the following 4 years. The Plan was reviewed and the updated version published in 2017. It expired in 2020 just as the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Given the circumstances, it was determined that a short-term interim plan was required to support the sector through this incredibly challenging period.

This interim plan took the form of a Tourism Recovery Action Plan 2021-2022, which formed this Council's response regarding immediate priorities and actions needed to support local tourism and hospitality businesses and keep our visitors engaged. Whilst 2020 and 2021 were affected by numerous Government closures and restrictions, 2022 is widely considered as the first year of recovery when the sector was able to re-open successfully. Major events returned and we were able to resume key research, including the Visitor Survey and Tourism Trade Survey, which will be instrumental in informing the DMP 2023-2025.

However, there are many internal and external factors which impact the DMP and the way in which Swansea is managed as a visitor destination. These include the Council's Corporate Priorities, Visit Wales strategies, the ongoing city centre regeneration programme, future funding, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act as well as our working relationship with the local tourism trade association.

2.2 Vision, priorities and delivery structure

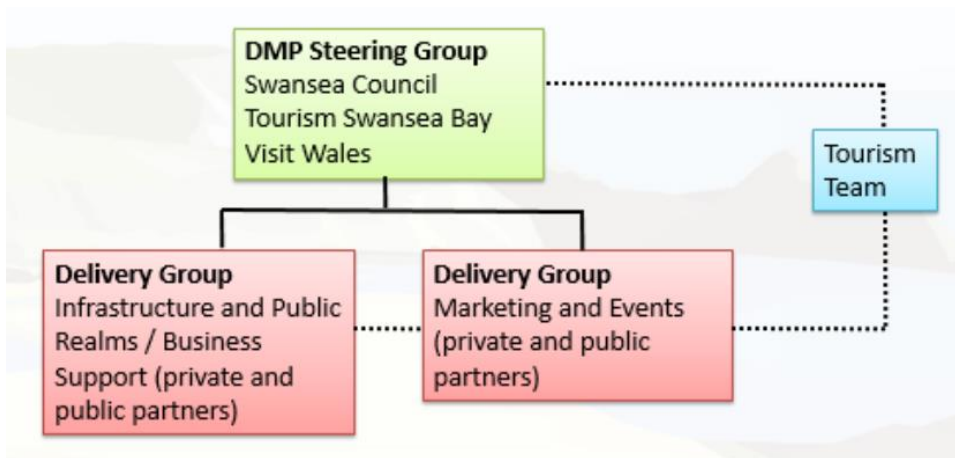
The Vision of the DMP 2017-2020 was for Swansea to be:

'A world-class tourism destination, which delivers a high-quality visitor experience in a pleasant, clean and well-maintained environment.'

Key Priorities were identified as:

- Partnership working
- Quality
- All Year-Round Destination
- Sustainability

A clear delivery structure was put in place with a DMP Steering Group made up of representatives from Swansea Council, Tourism Swansea Bay (TSB) and Visit Wales, which set the strategic direction for the DMP. A series of Delivery Groups ensured that partners from a wide range of Council departments, businesses and organisations met on a regular basis to discuss issues and actions identified within the DMP. Some of the partners involved at the time included Economic Development, Planning, Highways/Car Parks, Countryside/AONB, National Trust, National Resources Wales, Swansea University, Business Wales as well as private tourism operators.



2.3 Key achievements during 2017-2020

- Destination Marketing over the 3 'themed years' campaigns



2018 'Year of the Sea' Marketing Campaign #SeaSwanseaBay



2019 'Year of Discovery' Marketing Campaign



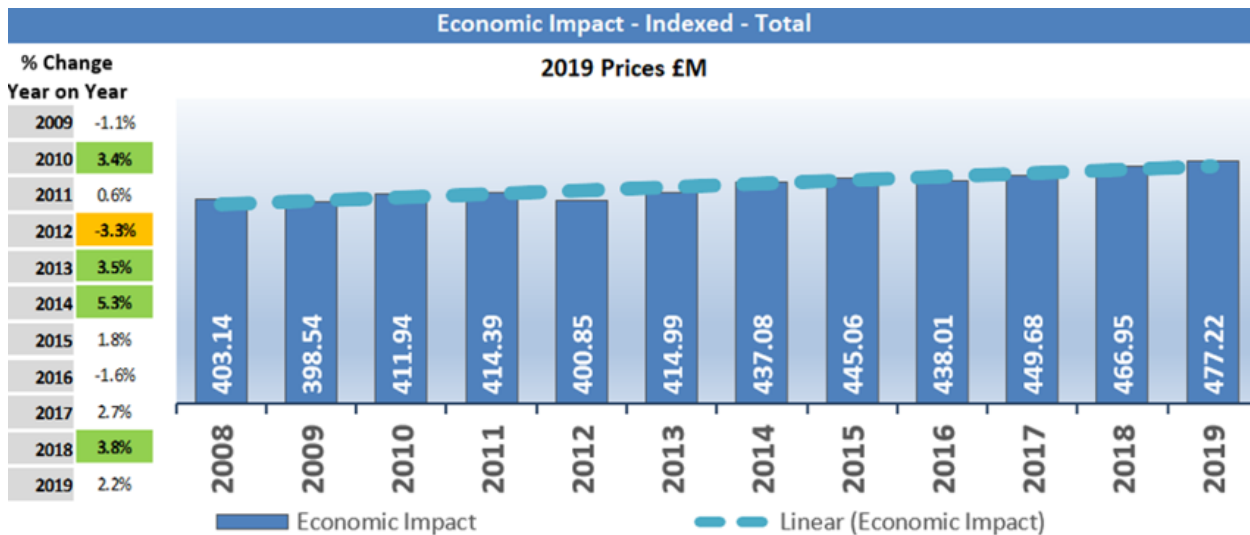
- Social media growth on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube
- Redevelopment of visitswanseabay.com
- Network of Visitor Information Points (VIPs) following the closure of the city centre Tourist Information Centre (TIC)
- Partnership working: closer working relationship with Visit Wales, Tourism Swansea Bay and other Council departments – for example the setting up of the Beaches Management Group (BMG) and the signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Swansea Council and TSB.
- General business support available to tourism operators on issues affecting them: planning, funding, business development, signage, grading, etc.
- Growing number of marketing partners promoting their business on visitswanseabay.com
- Delivery of capital projects such as the Changing Places unit and beach wheelchairs in Caswell Bay



- Successful trade engagement events such as Tourism Stakeholder Days and Swansea Bay Tourism Awards (largest in Wales)



- Helped support major capital projects, e.g. Port Eynon Feasibility Study, Hafod Copperworks, city centre regeneration and Skyline.
- 2019 STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) Summary: 4.8M visitors worth £477.22m to the local economy with nearly 6k jobs supported. Tourism trends show steady increase over the years.



- Visitor Survey 2019: 97% would recommend a visit. Average spend on the increase. Visitors generally positive when rating elements of their visit.

3. Covid-19 Pandemic

3.1 Impact on tourism industry

Tourism was one of the worst-affected sectors of the economy as it was one of the first to close and last to re-open. Government closures came in at the start of the

tourist season (March 2020) and a series of lockdowns and restrictions followed throughout 2020 and 2021, sometimes at very short notice and with confusing advice.

The vast majority of businesses experienced forced closures, reduced services, staff redundancies, cancellations or refunds. Partial re-opening in 2021 brought its share of uncertainty with new ways of working, enforced regulations, additional costs for Covid safety measures and recruitment challenges.

3.2 Tourism Recovery Action Plan 2021-2022

The DMP 2017-2020 expired in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic with most of the tourism industry closed. With so much uncertainty around, it was determined that a short-term interim action plan was needed as a response to the situation in order to support the tourism sector and focus on recovery.

The Plan linked with the Council-wide Economic Recovery Plan and set out 3 strategic priorities for 2021-2022.



Priority 1: Review and Research

- Maintain up-to-date information about our visitors
- Improve market intelligence and identify new trends
- Undertake bedstock, occupancy and trade surveys
- Monitor performance and review activity as appropriate

Priority 2: Inform and Support

- Engage with a wider base of local tourism and hospitality operators
- Forge new working relationships and partnerships, and develop new marketing opportunities
- Support businesses with relevant intelligence and funding opportunities
- Encourage, support and enable the local tourism industry to adapt and diversify

Priority 3: Remind and Return

- Rebuild customer confidence with appropriate marketing messaging and campaigns
- Maintain destination awareness and sustain growth in customer engagement

- Encourage bookings and visits via online marketing campaigns
- Continue with a flexible approach to destination marketing in line with constantly evolving situation

Outcomes

- Stronger local tourism and hospitality industry
- Renewed visitor confidence and engagement
- Increased number of bookings and visits
- Recovery, growth and prosperity of and for the local economy

3.3 Key achievements during pandemic

- Hundreds of business support enquiries, including assistance with grant support, interpretation of Welsh Government guidelines and guidance on safe re-opening
- Weekly tourism trade e-newsletters (98k views since launch in March 2020)
- Visit Swansea Bay Partner Package costs refunded for 2020, followed by free entry level packages in 2021 and 2022
- Online tourism engagements events including two well-attended Tourism Stakeholder Events
- Bedstock Survey completed (2021) - a snapshot of visitor accommodation and bedspaces available across the City and County of Swansea in terms of serviced, non-serviced and caravan & camping.
- Tourism Support Fund: following a successful application to the Council's Economic Recovery Fund (ERF), a pilot project was administered by the Tourism Team offering up to 100% funded grant for small accommodation operators in rural / semi-rural parts of Swansea to improve their offer / Visit Wales grading. Maximum grant of £8,000 per project. Launched in Oct 2021, the scheme was fully subscribed within a few weeks. 8 projects were supported successfully across the destination, leading to several 4-star gradings and a Gold Award from Visit Wales as well as accessibility improvements.
- The work of the Beaches Management Group (BMG) led to the retention of 3 Blue Flag Awards, the establishment of a Beach Charter at Caswell, a no smoking voluntary ban at 3 key beaches (first in Wales), extended RNLI lifeguard season, new water safety messages along the Prom, additional BBQ bins at key locations, partnership working with the Public Toilet Strategy Group and the installation of another two Changing Places units at Knab Rock and Rhossili in 2023 (partly-funded by Visit Wales).
- Destination Marketing: a series of campaigns to keep our visitors engaged throughout the pandemic at a time when they could not visit, e.g. 'Visit Swansea Bay. Later.', 'What's on your Wishlist' and as the sector partially re-opened with the 'Welcome Back' and 'Happy Place' campaigns.

- Online events: 'Wales Airshow #AtHome - A Digital Celebration' (04 July 2020) and 'Swansea Virtual Christmas Parade' (15 Nov 2020) which between them attracted over 135k views on Facebook and YouTube.

Wales Airshow #AtHome - A Digital Celebration

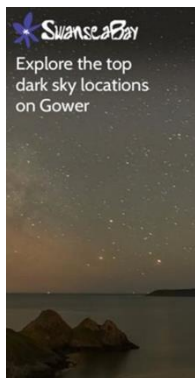


4. Post-Covid Recovery

4.1 Review of the 2022 destination marketing activity

2022 saw the successful re-opening of the tourism and hospitality industry with millions of visitors returning to Swansea Bay, Mumbles and Gower.

Destination marketing activity, including outdoor media and journalist visits, resumed and we were able to launch a series of campaigns targeting visitors looking to reconnect with nature and the great outdoors by focussing on the area's greatest assets, i.e. our natural environment. Some of the most successful campaigns of 2022 included Gower's Dark Skies and Spring Safaris featuring Iolo Williams. The underlying theme for each campaign was to 'Visit Responsibly'.



We successfully launched our new TikTok platform to reach out to younger audiences and produced the 2022 Day Visitor Guide – which had been put on hold from 2020. This will be our last piece of print as all visitor information is now available via the official destination website visitswanseabay.com

Major events resumed and 2022 saw one of the busiest events programmes ever for Swansea with the Wales Airshow, four live concerts in Singleton Park (Gerry Cinnamon, Nile Rodgers and CHIC, Anne-Marie and Paul Weller), World Triathlon Para Series, Swansea's first ever IronMan 70:3 (coming back in July 2023 and already sold out), Outdoor Theatre, Admiral Swansea Bay 10k and the incredibly popular Swansea Christmas Parade.

Thanks to additional Swansea Council ERF funding, we were able to open a second round of Tourism Support Fund (TSF) to aid recovery of small accommodation operators in rural areas. Launched in July 2022, the fund was fully subscribed within two weeks, and we successfully requested an extension to the scheme to support 15 projects across the destination. The completion date for this round of TSF is 3 March 2023.

4.2 Tourism research

Wales STEAM Summary

Figures released in the 2021 Wales STEAM Summary indicated that economic recovery was quicker in Swansea than the rest of South West Wales (SWW) when comparing 2021 with 2020:

- Economic impact: +107% in Swansea (average for SWW was +88%)
- Visitor Days: +113% in Swansea (average for SWW was +91%)
- Visitor Numbers: +116% in Swansea (average for SWW was +77%)

Visitor Survey and Tourism Trade Survey

With the sector fully re-opened and visitors back in the destination, we were finally able to conduct two key pieces of research:

- Visitor Survey: 1,000 face-to-face interviews conducted between April and September 2022 at 7 sampling points across the destination
- Tourism Trade Survey: 125 businesses surveyed online or via telephone interview during Nov-Dec 2022 (the largest trade survey ever conducted by us)

Whilst the findings are still being analysed and have not yet been released, early indications are that recovery in Swansea is well underway:

- 67% of businesses rated their level of business in 2022 as 'excellent' or 'good'. This goes up to 73% for the accommodation sector.
- 48% rated their 2022 performance as better than 2021. This goes up to 55% for businesses in the city centre.
- Accommodation operators are experiencing the quickest recovery with 88% 'fully' or 'nearly' back to pre-Covid levels of occupancy.
- 45% of businesses interviewed have plans to expand in the future.
- 62% feel 'very optimistic' or 'optimistic' about their long-term business prospects coming out the pandemic and moving into 2023.
- 73% of businesses feel 'very well informed' or 'fairly well informed' by Visit Swansea Bay about issues affecting them.

4.3 Future challenges and how we can help

Despite the general optimism displayed in our tourism trade survey, major challenges remain for the immediate future of the industry, including:

- Welsh Government policies, particularly for the self-catering sector, e.g. 182 day rule, statutory licensing and the proposed tourism levy.
- Planning rules and the perceived difficulties in getting developments approved
- Cost of living, rising commodity prices and squeezed margins
- Recruitment and retention of staff
- High seasonality of the destination

When asked how we can help alleviate some of these challenges, businesses highlighted the following areas of support:

- Marketing support
- Grants / funding
- Business advice
- Free marketing packages
- Liaison with other Council departments

5. Destination Management Plan 2023-25

5.1 How it will be informed

The new DMP will be informed by a review of the existing action plan and 3 key pieces of research:

- 2022 Visitor Survey – completed
- 2022 Tourism Trade Survey – completed
- Hotel Demand Study for Swansea City Centre – at tender stage

Other key elements which will influence the new DMP:

- Economic recovery – how the DMP can support the sector's recovery
- City Centre regeneration programme – strategic fit with DMP
- Major events – recognising their contribution to the tourism industry
- Funding – what support becomes available over next 3 years

5.2 Strategic priorities

Our research indicates that the four Strategic Priorities should remain as:

- Quality – improve offer
- Partnership Working – foster effective working relationships
- Seasonality – create a year-round destination
- Sustainability – preserve our natural assets and ensure economic viability

5.3 Proposed timeline

- Draft ready by end of February 2023
- Approval by DMP Steering Group in April 2023

6. Conclusions

This report highlights the context in which the DMP was established and delivered over the years, what its key achievements were and what is proposed for the next 3 years as the tourism and hospitality industry emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Council has continued to support the sector throughout the pandemic, by utilising its existing resources with an innovative and flexible approach to an unprecedented global crisis. This has succeeded in keeping the existing customer base engaged, whilst also supporting our tourism business partners and enabling them to re-open and plan for recovery.

However, there are still challenges and opportunities ahead and recent research such as the Tourism Trade Survey, Visitor Survey and Hotel Demand Study will be instrumental in informing the new DMP2023-25.

7. Legal implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report other than those set out in the body of the report.

8. Finance Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. Integrated Impact Assessment Implications

The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, 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 Acts.
- 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.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.

- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

This report is a review of the Destination Management Plan (DMP) to date, its main achievements and what is proposed moving forward. The new DMP will be informed by three major pieces of research and delivered in partnership with the private sector. The DMP has low visibility to the general public and does not require engagement from protected groups. There are no environmental, political, financial or cultural risks associated with it.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 has been fully considered in the development of the DMP, which supports its goals and objectives.

The DMP has a positive impact on the destination as a whole by improving quality and delivering a better visitor experience. This in turn supports the visitor economy and overall prosperity across the City and County of Swansea. By supporting the area's economic recovery and working closely with industry partners, the DMP also has a positive impact on the Council's reputation.

This report has been IIA screened and the outcome is that it does not require a full IIA.

Glossary of terms:

DMP – Destination Management Plan
 TSB – Tourism Swansea Bay
 TAIS – Tourism Amenity Investment Support
 STEAM - Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor
 VIP – Visitor Information Point
 TIC – Tourist Information Centre
 BMG – Beaches Management Plan
 MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
 TRAP – Tourism Recovery Action Plan
 ERF – Economic Recovery Fund
 TSF – Tourism Support Fund
 SWW – South West Wales
 IIA – Integrated Impact Assessment

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – DMP Presentation (PDF version)

Appendix B – IIA Screening Form