

[National Assembly for Wales](#)
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Evidence from South East Wales Directors of Environment and Regeneration
(SEWDER) – TOU 09

SEWDER RESPONSE TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES' ENTERPRISE & BUSINESS COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO TOURISM



INTRODUCTION

The Cardiff Capital Region covers 10 of the 22 Local Authority areas in Wales. Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan. This area encompasses 48% of the total population of Wales.

The group of South East Wales Directors of Environment and Regeneration (SEWDER) reports to the South East Wales Chief Executives and Managing Directors Group and the Welsh Local Government Association South East Wales Regional Partnership Board. SEWDER have developed a Regional Strategic Framework endorsed by the Leaders of all ten unitary authorities which identifies the key strategic priorities to ensure growth and prosperity for the region:

- Physical Connectivity
- Business and Growth
- People and Skills

SEWDER has established several thematic groups that are identifying opportunities for collaborative project development across the region focusing on the emerging next round of European Programmes, engaging with stakeholders, Welsh Government, The Welsh European Funding Office and other interested private and third sector parties.

Tourism has been one of the thematic groups to be established, acknowledging that the growth and development of existing tourism based SMEs and the establishment of new tourism businesses can make a significant contribution to the safeguarding and creation of sustainable jobs and growth. Investment in key iconic destinations will enhance and identify the Cardiff Capital Region as a place to visit, invest and do business.

Wishing to submit a response to the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry into Tourism, this document outlines the Cardiff Capital Region response from a Local Authority perspective. This response has been approved for submission by the South East Wales Directors of Environment and Regeneration (SEWDER).

INQUIRY INTO TOURISM

The Terms of Reference for the National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Business Committee's Inquiry into Tourism sets out to:

- Assess progress made by the Welsh Government towards achieving its Programme for Government commitments relating to tourism, as well as the suitability of these aims;
- Assess the ambition and deliverability of the Welsh Government's aim to grow tourism earnings by 10 per cent by 2020, as well as progress made towards this aim;
- Assess the suitability and effectiveness of the structures and support the Welsh Government has in place for the tourism industry in Wales, and its future plans for regional support.

Issues that the Committee is considering as part of these terms of reference include:

- The clarity and strength of Wales's tourism "brand";
- The effectiveness of Welsh Government attempts to maximise the value of the domestic tourism market;
- The effectiveness of Welsh Government attempts to maximise the value of the international tourism market;
- Performance of Visit Wales compared with tourism development agencies in the rest of the UK;
- The success of Visit Wales marketing activities;
- The work of Visit Britain as it relates to Wales, and the extent of coordination between Visit Britain and Visit Wales;
- The sufficiency and effectiveness of Welsh Government resources targeted at promoting tourism and supporting Welsh tourism businesses, and whether it represents good value for money;
- How the Welsh Government monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its tourism support and marketing activities;
- The use made of opportunities for funding and other support from the EU;
- The success of Welsh Government efforts to increase the quality of Wales's tourism offer;
- The extent to which the marketing and development of tourism in Wales makes the most of Wales's cultural, historical and natural assets;
- The impact of major events on Wales's tourism economy, and the success of Welsh Government attempts to maximise this.

PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

The Tourism Task & Finish group identified clearly that there was a need to explore the accommodation/key attraction business growth requirements. Therefore, a Regional Diagnostic Survey of tourism-related businesses was initiated which explored the accommodation/attraction Business needs across the region. The main intended outcome of this analysis was to discover and document information and data about the Tourism related sector in the South East Wales area which would form a regional baseline and enable the Group to identify areas for development which would provide the evidence for future

grant/funding applications and identify any opportunities for shared collaborative regional projects.

It is clear from the report that areas such as Business support/development, IT, Marketing and Social Media are identified as priority needs throughout all areas of the Tourism Business Sector. Working in conjunction with the Welsh Government/Business Wales and Visit Wales there are opportunities to deliver development on a localised, regional and ultimately National level, by allowing businesses to realise opportunities to access targeted financial support. Businesses have indicated their requirements for capital and revenue support and a localised grant scheme is one option which we suggest be explored in terms of options either as (i) a stand alone Tourism Programme or (ii) linking directly to the emerging new Local Investment Fund or (iii) linking directly into future Welsh Government Development Funding, and supporting the implementation of the Visit Wales Partnership for Growth strategy.

VALUE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Taking into consideration this new approach by Welsh Government/Visit Wales there will be regional opportunities for greater synergy for enhanced partnership working with effective delivery of programmes and projects on a local level. This localised approach should be inclusive of Local Government and local Businesses directly linked to priorities of Destination Management plans and captured. Clearly there are opportunities for Tourism Destination Managers in each LA in the Cardiff Capital Region, through SEWDER, to create a regional Destination Management group (DMG) and this should be explored with Visit Wales providing a localised platform to engage directly with the Businesses which has been a weakness recognised in the RTP consultation responses/conclusions.

Each Local Authority leads on their respective areas Destination management plans which include key Strategic priorities including products and themes that they would like to further develop. An initial grouping of these priorities has taken place and this process will be complete by Oct 2014 which will then give the group an opportunity to create a regional destination plan which will incorporate these priority developments. It is important not to underestimate the role that Local Authorities play in co-ordination, account management and guidance in developing iconic visitor destinations, and the value that Visit Wales and Welsh Government can utilise within those organisations to support the delivery of strategic aims and ambitions at a localised level.

COLLABORATION & INTEGRATION

The Tourism SEWDER group has been keen not to duplicate its energy and efforts with similar networks/groupings, and it has worked closely with the Regional Tourism Partnership (RTP'S) and specifically in SE Wales Capital Regional Tourism. However, it is important to note that the recent Welsh Government announcement as a result of the publication of the outcomes of the consultation on regional engagement and partnership working in Tourism that the RTP'S will discontinue as of Sept 2014.

Welsh Government has indicated that there will be a new regional structure set up by Visit Wales and greater regional representation on the Tourism Advisory Board. It is envisaged that this new structure will create stronger links between tourism businesses and

Government, increased accountability of local delivery with a simplified structure for tourism in Wales.

Whilst the RTP will discontinue it has recently produced a Tourism Action Framework for the emerging Cardiff Capital Region. This framework provides an overview of the importance of Tourism in the SE Wales City Region, the policy context, the key product experiences and future priority projects. As part of this emerging framework the Tourism T&F group recognises it does have quality products within its destination management plans that it would like to raise the profile of and further develop and in doing so can collaboratively create a critical mass of iconic destinations across the region.

It is felt that that by creating a DMG there will be greater coordination of joint product development and increased accountability at a local level, in addition to providing greater support to local Businesses as part of broader Economic Development through effective account management. These key points directly relate to the current position of WG/VW and the proposed new regional structure.

By creating a new Strategic Tourism partnership, meetings will need to take place with WG/VW to ensure all developments are synchronised and a complimentary programme of developments takes place.

Welsh Government/Visit Wales marketing traditionally has provided a lead for the Local Authorities supported in the past by organisations such as the Regional Tourism Partnerships and Valleys Regional Park.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the role of Local Government in support the direct delivery and accountability of Welsh Governments aspirations in Tourism development should be directly linked and in doing so it should provide greater synergy and enhanced partnership working on a localised level. As already mentioned this localised approach should be inclusive of Local Government and local Businesses directly linked to priorities of Destination Management plans and captured.

SEWDER would support and encourage a further discussion with Welsh Government on the principles of this paper and would welcome the views of the Committee within the terms of reference of their Inquiry.