



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-2020

**FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

23 July 2019

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR
PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT**

Agenda Item No. 6

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TOURISM STRATEGY AND
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT
PLAN**

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1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to gain Members' views on the proposed approach to positioning of Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) as a key visitor destination, and how we could capitalise on proposed tourism developments in the North of Rhondda Cynon Taf, to deliver a world-class outdoor adventure/activity offer.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members consider the ideas presented by officers, highlighting the strategic approach and building blocks of a future Strategy, in order to position RCT as a successful world-class visitor destination.
- 2.2 Members to provide feedback on this presentation, to shape the future Tourism Strategy for RCT.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Tourism is increasingly being identified as a key driver for the economy, employment, skills and regeneration. RCT as a visitor destination is becoming more popular with tourists year-on-year, delivering a considerable amount of money to the local economy. In 2017, we attracted 2.09 million visitors, with a total economic impact of £163.97 million, (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor – STEAM Figures).
- 3.2 RCT has an existing suite of quality attractions such as The Royal Mint Experience (96,644 visitors in 2017), The Welsh Mining Experience (40,307), The National Lido of Wales – Lido Ponty (75,065), Penderyn Distillery (42,709), and Dare Valley Country Park (102,855) all contributing to a strong and attractive visitor offer.
- 3.3 However, visits to RCT are weighted heavily towards day trips, as opposed to overnight stays, with only 500,000 of the 2.09 million visitors staying overnight in 2017. This was an increase of 0.6% when compared to 2016, however it is apparent that presently visitors travel into RCT for a few hours and then leave, taking with them their associated spend (i.e. food/drinks, accommodation, etc).
- 3.4 Within the national context, visitor figures totalled just over 95 million across Wales in 2017, an increase of approximately 3.3% when compared to 2016 and it is evident that ‘tourism’ is an emerging market that has the potential to generate significant employment opportunities, boost the local economy and provide opportunities for residents to access high quality facilities on their doorstep.
- 3.5 The Global Adventure Tourism Market Report 2016-2020 predicts a 46% growth in the adventure market globally by 2020. This presents a real opportunity for RCT, with demand for walking, cycling and other outdoor recreation activities at an all-time high (55% of Visit RCT website traffic for things to do was weighted to this market).
- 3.6 A planning application is expected in the very near future for the world-renowned visitor attraction ‘Zip World’ who propose to set up their franchise in RCT, with initial operations at the Rhigos Mountain. Since its inception in North Wales, Zip World has injected approximately £251 million into the visitor economy, with around 100,000 participants annually visiting the Bethesda site and paying to experience Velocity 2 (the offering similar to that which is being proposed in RCT). This figure and the associated spend, relates to paying participants only, and does not include spectator figures which accounts for up to a further 30%. As an employer it has created over 450 paying jobs and 93.3% of Zip World employees were local to the area.
- 3.7 One of the main reasons Zip World selected RCT as their next outdoor adventure/activity site is that it is an area steeped in breath-taking landscape and terrain, with world-renowned history/heritage on par with a select few other hugely popular and iconic destinations such as Cheddar Gorge and the Peak District.

- 3.8 There are a number of other significant projects in the pipeline that will benefit from being co-ordinated through a coherent and robust Tourism Strategy. These include the reopening of the Rhondda and Abernant Tunnels, Waterfall Country around Penderyn and Pontneddfechan, as well as Dare Valley Country Park in Aberdare and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park in Pontypridd, both of which have received Discovery Gateway status, as part of the Valleys Taskforce's drive to promote the Valleys Regional Park – all requiring a coordinated approach if the benefits are to be maximised.
- 3.9 Future investment in RCT's transport infrastructure such as the dualling of the A465 and the South Wales Metro improvements compliment the objectives of such a Strategy, as these will enable better accessibility and connectivity within the County Borough for residents and visitors alike.

4.0 THE STRATEGY

4.1 This report will be supported by a comprehensive presentation to Members at the meeting of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee. The presentation is aimed at assisting Members in formulating their views on all aspects of the proposed Tourism Strategy and Destination Management Plan. Such aspects will include:

- The ambition of the plan
- Areas to be covered
- Potential key attractions
- Infrastructure requirements
- Hospitality and accommodation requirements
- Employment and skills
- Public and stakeholder engagement
- Key next steps and actions

4.2 It is then anticipated that these views are used to inform a draft Strategy to be reported to Cabinet in the Autumn for approval. The strategy will then form the foundation for the development of a number of supporting delivery plans including a Destination Management Plan for RCT.

5.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An equality and diversity screening exercise has been undertaken and no action is required at this time.

6.0 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

6.1 Ongoing consultation is taking place with the tourism industry and local businesses key to the visitor offer, and the information collated will be used to inform the strategy.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 There are no financial implications directly aligned to this report.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

9.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 9.1 Through a strategic approach and definitive Tourism Strategy that looks to position RCT as a major outdoor adventure/activity destination, the delivery of all three of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of economy, people and place are contributed to. Visitor footfall figures into the area and the local towns and communities will increase, creating a knock-on effect on the prosperity of local businesses and neighbourhoods. With the outdoor adventure/activity theme, more residents/visitors will have the opportunity to participate in additional physical activity and with the inward investment expected and the associated benefits anticipated within the local economy, residents will be proud and satisfied with the County Borough as a place to live.
- 9.2 The Council's Corporate Plan emphasises an underlying commitment to the residents of RCT with three priorities - People, Places and Prosperity. Residents are encouraged to lead active and healthy lifestyles to maintain their mental wellbeing and it is essential that measures are in place to reduce RCT's carbon footprint, for example via improved active travel routes and links between county boroughs and further investment in parks and open space facilities. There is a priority to generate jobs and better paid employment creating vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise, and focus on the development of a tourism offer that encourages people to come into the county borough and local businesses to prosper.
- 9.3 Regionally, the launch of the Valleys Taskforce, and its identification of the Valleys Regional Park and identified Discovery Gateway Sites (there are two sites within RCT – Dare Valley Country Park and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park) highlight the importance placed on 'landscape, culture and identity,' 'recreation and wellbeing' and communities and enterprise' by the Welsh Government, whereby 'maximising the social, economic, and environmental potential of the Valley's natural and cultural heritage assets' is a vision that the future Strategy can position itself well with.
- 9.4 Visit Wales' Partnership for Growth: Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020 sets the tone and vision nationally for the tourism sector. The outputs of a tourism Strategy based upon the outdoors and adventure/activity, taking advantage of RCT's spectacular landscape, will align itself well with Visit Wales' Thematic Years, as 2019 has been identified as the 'Year of Discovery' and 2020 and possibly 2021 the 'Year of Outdoors'. If this linkage wasn't obvious enough, Visit Wales have just begun a campaign promoting 'The Wales Way', with one of the three sub-campaigns focussing on 'The Cambrian Way'. This is a complete north to south journey through the heart of Wales along the A470 from coast to coast, whereby visitors are encouraged to 'go out and discover' aspects of Wales they did not know existed. With the Strategy identifying

projects in the North of RCT, and the close proximity to the A470, it supports the vision Visit Wales has for Wales as a nation and visitor destination.

- 9.5 The outputs of the Strategy will also assist the Council contribute to the wellbeing goals that 'The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' has put in place:
- (i) A prosperous Wales
 - (ii) A resilient Wales
 - (iii) A healthier Wales
 - (iv) A Wales of cohesive communities
 - (v) A globally responsible Wales

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The report sets out the initial steps in producing an ambitious Tourism Strategy for RCT and takes into account current and future projects such as the proposed Zip World development that will have significant impacts on the visitor numbers coming to RCT.
- 10.2 The information presented will focus upon opportunities and challenges in order to fully exploit this increase in visitor numbers, drawing attention to potential gaps and areas of development in accommodation as well as skills/education shortages within the tourism sector presently.
- 10.3 The presentation will be used not only to update Members on current and future projects, as well as potential benefits brought about by a dedicated and focussed Tourism Strategy, but also to gain Members' views as to how they feel the Strategy should be shaped, both in its content and its delivery.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972

As amended by

THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT, 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 JULY 2019

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Background Papers

Nil