

Monmouthshire Destination Management Partnership
Meeting at 2pm Wednesday, 19 June 2019
Conference Room, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk. NP15 1GA.

Minutes

Welcome and introductions

Aine Morris (Chair) (AM) Abergavenny Food Festival

Nicola Edwards (NE) Food & Tourism Strategic Manager, MCC

Kevin Ford (KF) Digital Tourism Marketing Officer, MCC

Liz Marshall (LM) Inspire2Adventure, Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association

Jo Nugent (JN) Angel Hotel, Abergavenny & District Tourism Association

Louisa Giles (LG) Visit Wales

David Cummings (DC) Chair, Monmouth Chamber

Tony Konieczny (TK) Mayor of Abergavenny, Abergavenny Town Council

Jane Lee (JL) Abergavenny Town Council

Cath Fallon (CF) Head of Economy & Innovation, MCC

Connor Leacock (CL) Business Support Apprentice, MCC

Ian Saunders (IS) Head of Tourism, Leisure, Culture & Youth, MCC

Frances O'Brien (FO) Chief Officer, Enterprise, MCC

Kelly Jackson-Graham (KJG) Monmouth Town Council

Ruth Waycott (RW) Wye Valley AONB

Matthew Lewis (ML) Green Infrastructure & Countryside Manager, MCC

Apologies for absence

- James Woodcock
- Aaron Reeks

Role of Partnership & Draft Terms of Reference (ML)

- Monmouthshire Destination Management Plan 2017-2020 is result of extensive consultation with stakeholders. It is important to remember that it is the destination's plan not Monmouthshire County Council's. The role of the Partnership is to champion the visitor economy of Monmouthshire and drive forward greater investment in the

destination through a new and improved visitor experience that will deliver increased expenditure, reduced seasonality, and higher visitor satisfaction. It will oversee progress on delivery of the current plan and input into development of the next plan.

Monmouthshire's Destination Management Plan 2017-2020 – update on progress (NE)

- NE discussed the main points on Monmouthshire's DMP 17 – 20.
- Please find PowerPoint presentation here:
 - <https://mediafiles.thedms.co.uk/Publication/MW-Mon/cms/pdf/Monmouthshire%20DMP%2019%20June%202019.pdf>
- Progress on delivery of strategic aims of Plan:
 - On target for 10% tourism revenue growth by 2020 (from 2015 base)
 - 9% real tourism revenue growth to 2018
 - Slightly down on bringing off-season proportion of revenue up
 - Pattern of annual revenue distribution unchanged, but percentage of total revenue generated between October and March slightly down between 2015 – 2018. (38% - 36%)
 - Not much change in tourism revenue distribution across Monmouthshire
 - Staying visitors although fewer in number, generate the lion's share of tourism revenue.
 - Visitor accommodation concentrated in North and mid Monmouthshire.
 - Delivery of high quality visitor experiences. Excellent visitor satisfaction, likelihood to return and recommend ratings in 2016 Visitor Survey. 2019 Visitor survey commissioned with interviews due to take place in June, July, August & September at the following locations.
 - Abergavenny, Chepstow & Monmouth town centres plus Tintern Abbey
 - Will be able to compare 2019 figures with the results of the 2016 Visit Wales Monmouthshire Survey
 - [2016 Survey](#)
 - Progress on delivery of DMP activity shown on presentation – activity delivered by a wide range of partners, not just MCC.

Grant funding secured to deliver DMP objectives (ML, NE)

- **c£1.2m from National Lottery Heritage Fund / RCDF grant for The Living Levels Partnership Project**
 - Single largest investment at the moment (total programme of c£4M).
 - 10 partners, RSPB Cymru leading. Includes Newport, Cardiff & Monmouthshire councils
 - Provides activities, training, learning, natural habitat restoration etc.
 - c1.2m 3 year programme for destination management plan objectives
 - This project aims to improve visitor experience across whole area of the Gwent Levels

- JL asked whether this money could help go towards Bailey Park in Abergavenny
 - ML – Project focused on organisational capacity e.g. staff training and MonLife sites.
 - Will be a wider programme of training (e.g. volunteers) so may see a way of helping. Discuss more if successful.

2019 rgavenny Food Festival plans and opportunities (AM)

- AFF has always been famous for the market, but people can access products more easily now, so this is less of a hook. AFF has to be more focussed on experiences now, as this what people are now looking for.
- 37,000 visitors to festival in 2018
 - 80% sold out for events
 - Ticket sales up
- Focus on 'out of town' visitors (1 – 1.5 hour away) for marketing
 - E.g. Bristol billboards
- Accommodation issue in Abergavenny during event. Having to accommodate sponsors out of county.
- Food & drink is Monmouthshire's USP, but there is no food bias to this group.
- Plans for this year's Food Festival
 - Programme goes live this week.
 - Structure similar to 2018.
 - Keen to run business as usual for next couple of years after a lot of change in previous years.
 - As a brand which can represent the region nationally, there is an under-developed potential to bring people in
- National reputation on specific food people but regional audience
- Younger audience recently, 25 – 35 years.
- Comms activity paying off – sales strong.
 - Applications up by a third for businesses (half of those applying offered a place)
 - Increased number of applications from Welsh food & drink businesses.
 - Younger farmers, inheriting family land. Doing something different.
 - Sustainable packing at this year's event.
- Opportunities
 - Opportunities for development identified
 - Historic disconnect between festival and Abergavenny
 - Communications important
 - 50% of car park revenue goes to local community groups (c£8k)
 - 220 young people involved
 - Town ambassador scheme
 - Intergenerational project aiming to pair knowledgeable more mature ambassadors with younger people.
 - Black Mountains College initiative.
 - Summer school (future of food, future of bread)

- Focus on young people & education to keep benefits going.
 - Youth produce
 - Festival production training, pairing up young people with events to learn event management skills (working with Green Man & Hay Festival)
- Only scratched surface for driving visits and as a platform for highlighting what is here.
 - Wealth of new food in Abergavenny (e.g. Coffee Shops, Angel Bakery)
 - Want to capture foodie stories. E.g. Young people becoming market gardeners.
 - Stories of people struggling to afford Bristol prices and setting up their businesses in Abergavenny.

Tourism Association / Chamber of Commerce tourism updates and forward plans

- David Cummings, Monmouth Chamber
 - Infrastructure projects.
 - 90 space car park opened up in Monmouth.
 - 30 space car park near dual carriageway proposed, but taken back to planning committee recently.
 - 60 bedroom premier inn delivered
 - Spa Hotel planning approval overturned by Welsh Government because of flood risk.
 - Bed space issue in Monmouth
 - 146 bedrooms in Monmouth, compared to 300 in Ross
 - 97% occupancy rate
 - Cycle routes proposed in 2017 never ended up in active travel documents.
 - Cycle parking not being installed until end of 2019.
 - Major road closures an issue (especially for Tintern)
 - Lost a 5 metre road sign on A449 for Monmouth in 2015, not yet replaced.
 - National Express Service lost completely. (Service they did have was run at unpopular times)
 - Monmouth can sometimes feel like the 'Forgotten NE corner of Cardiff Capital Region'
 - DMP an excellent document
 - People want an experience in towns.
- Liz Marshall (WVFDTA)
 - WVFDTA has recently been rejigging/consolidating their board.
 - In position to move forward now and keen to work with partners.
- Jo Nugent (ADTA)

- ADTA meet 4 times a year, but there are not enough volunteers.
- Looking at working with business community in Abergavenny.
 - Possibly setting up something similar to Crickhowell i-towns map.
- Website updated recently.
- New brochure launched for 2019. Linked up with King Henry VIII comprehensive for brochure cover design competition.

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority / Wye Valley AONB updates and forward plans

- Ruth Waycott (AONB)
 - 250th anniversary of Gilpin Wye Tour in 2020.
 - Conserve and enhance landscape.
 - Opportunity to have a conversation about landscape and conservation.
 - Working on project with Herefordshire to raise awareness about significance of Gilpin
 - Gilpin was a pioneer in the appreciation of landscape in Britain and his ideas led, much later, to the designation of protected landscapes – including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (and National Parks) of which the Wye Valley is one.
 - Picturesque Wye Tour brochure
 - Potentially refreshing
 - New website being developed for AONB
 - Working on Wye Valley Walk / Offas Dyke.
 - Wye Valley River Festival 2020
 - Three River Festivals to date.
 - Last year best so far.
 - Want to keep momentum and aspiration. Well into planning for the 2020 festival. Not secured all funding yet from arts councils.
 - Money for something good and big at Tintern.
 - Theme for 2020 festival is 'Time' – Time to make a difference, time running out etc.
 - Happy for people to get involved.

Visit Wales update (LG)

- Key WG funded projects already covered in presentation
- 2019 Year of Discovery hashtags
 - #findyourepic for visitors
 - #thisismywales for residents / communities
- Great to see businesses utilising the Years theme, eg. The Angel did discovery packages.
- Year of the Great Outdoors 2020 – 2021.

- Consultation with businesses has led to Visit Wales using themes for two years going forward
- More chance to engage
- New Visit Wales website as part of overall Wales.com
- Lots of consultation with partners
 - New strategy finished by end of 2019 / early 2020.
- Newsletter available.
- Another workshop at end of year for Year of the Great Outdoors information.

Future agenda items

- Role of Partnership
 - Initially set up to guide and scrutinise delivery of plan
 - Opportunity for partners to identify areas of common interest to work on
 - Meetings have to be useful for partners, so they keep attending.
- DC suggested that having a few concrete priorities was better than having too many
- Question asked as to the remit of tourism within enterprise
 - FO – Active travel will be going under IS. Good to link together. Evolving as a group.
 - Critical stage with LDP. Growth and economic ambition plan is very important.
 - MCC gauging the right balance between sharing info.
 - CF – Future economies analysis. Economic growth and ambition plan in development.
 - Important to look at issues such as visitor accommodation in south
 - Current works ongoing such as Caldicot regen, Abergavenny Market Hall.
- TK asked about integration of strands. Danger of operating in silos.
 - E.g. Green Infrastructure Plan as part of a strand into tourism offer
 - All kinds of impact of things (e.g. Heads of the Valleys Road mean loss of caravan park)
 - Are we creating more than just high end accommodation?
 - Loss of hostel in Abergavenny
- AM – Quantity and quality of visitor experiences in area excellent. Are we communicating this well with visitors? Joined up face of region missing.
- FO – Wider partners involved at a Public Service Board level.
 - e.g. Natural Resources Wales.
 - Does this group need to be broader and include more groups?
 - NE confirmed that NRW was invited.
- RW asked if it was intentional not to have a lot of private sector involvement?
 - NE – All tourism associations and chambers of commerce invited but not all here. May need to consider inviting individual businesses to get more private sector involvement. May also need to look at the best time for a meeting to ensure maximum involvement.

- AM – Need to look at not just one particular sector.
- KJG – Funding to train ambassadors, but town councils also need to know what opportunities there are to work together to develop tourism.
- AM – Wales has opportunity related to progressive policies. Grant funding environment richer here. Opportunity for creative conversation about tourism as significant driver for economy of region.
- TK – How is all this branded? How do we put out what we are coming up with?
 - ML - Visit Monmouthshire brand is the central link between everyone.
- IS spoke about a regional footprint
 - Need to prepare for future capital bids by having feasibility studies completed
 - Need to consider our big aspirations
- What is the longer term strategic masterplan? (FO)
 - Helps us if we can go for larger schemes. E.g. Caldicot Tri-regeneration scheme.
 - We need to have projects that can be tweaked to fit the funding scheme
 - ML Agrees. E.g. Railway bridges needed to help Wye Valley Walk, hotel accommodation.

Date and venue of next meeting.

- AM and NE to meet to discuss remit of Partnership.
- RW – AONB happy to host a meeting. Good to get people out.
- New meeting room in Abergavenny Market Hall planned as part of refurbishment.
- Consensus that meetings required more than twice a year.
 - Next meeting October. Date to be circulated.