

Fixing systemic issues through collaboration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

How Visit Wales are working with others for sustainable tourism

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The 870 miles Wales Coast Path

Overview

Visit Wales is working across boundaries and across sectors to deliver an approach to tourism in Wales that considers economic growth, environmental conservation, social wellbeing and Wales' cultural heritage.

Background

Visit Wales is the Welsh Government's tourism team within the Department of Economy, Science and Transport. Its role is to support the Welsh tourism industry, improve tourism in Wales and provide the appropriate strategic framework within which private enterprise can achieve sustainable growth and success, and improve the social and economic wellbeing of Wales.

Results

Identify outcomes that increase the wellbeing of Wales

Evidence

Make decisions using better information

Collaboration

Work with others across boundaries

Long term

Fix the causes rather than the symptoms

Connect

Focus on the economic, social and environmental benefits

Transparency

Measure and report on the difference you make

This is one of a series of SD stories that can be found on the Welsh Government website at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/>

Tourism accounts for around 4.4% of the total direct Gross Value Added (GVA) for the Welsh Economy and employs over 88,000 people, nearly 1 in every 5 jobs is in tourism in Pembrokeshire and Conwy. 2011 saw over 10.5 million visits from domestic and international visitors with most coming for Wales' unique natural landscapes, beaches, activities and culture.

As outlined in the new tourism strategy for Wales, "A Partnership for Growth 2020", the tourism sector is committed to sustainable growth and acknowledges that those qualities attracting visitors such as landscape, culture, language and heritage need to be safeguarded for future generations, creating long term value and jobs.

Why

Visit Wales' approach to sustainability is driven by the complex and systemic nature of the challenges and work it faces.

The natural environment and local culture are some of Wales' key attractions and so preserving and enhancing them is very important to Welsh tourism. Tourists are becoming more ethically aware and expect a visitor experience that is environmentally sensitive, offers a strong sense of place and is closely linked to local communities. Visit Wales cannot do this job alone and so have been driven to work collaboratively with other organisations such as Natural Resources Wales and Cadw.

"Because the built heritage and natural environment are Wales' greatest assets in tourism terms, the maintenance, preservation, protection and enhancement of these areas is key."

Stephanie Woodward,
Senior Programme Development and
Partnerships Manager

Visit Wales also recognised that managing and adapting to climate change will be critical to the future of sustainable tourism in Wales. The impact of global changes in climate, local impacts such as the availability of water supply during periods of drought, increased storminess and risk of flooding, and changes in wildlife distribution need to be considered when planning tourism developments.

What they did

To grow tourism in Wales in a sustainable way Visit Wales adopted a Sustainable Tourism Framework in 2007, setting out these key objectives:

- Promoting local prosperity
- Supporting community well being and involvement
- Minimising tourism's environmental impact
- Protecting and giving value to natural heritage and culture

Working in partnership is central for these, so Visit Wales set up a number of groups that work together on Wales-wide issues.

The **Sustainable Tourism Forum** was set up in 2007 to coordinate the development of sustainable tourism across Wales. 40 organisations from the private, public and voluntary sectors meet three times a year to collectively develop and drive actions to meet sustainable outcomes. The forum has for instance led to the development of sub-groups focusing on the promotion and sustainability of Wales' coast.

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The **All Wales Coastal Forum** sets the direction for investment and development for tourism on the coast, while **The Green Sea Partnership** set up in 1996 brings stakeholders together to safeguard and enhance Wales' coast, improving the quality of beaches, the built and natural environment and maintaining and improving seawater quality.

Environment for Growth (E4G), a priority theme within the ERDF Convergence Programme West Wales and the Valleys and the East Wales Regional Competitiveness and Employment 2007-13 Operational Programmes, brings together a robust partnership between the Welsh Government, Visit Wales, Regeneration, Cadw and Natural Resources Wales. The partnership has been working together since 2008 in developing an exciting suite of six strategic projects: Valleys Regional Park; Heritage Tourism; Communities and Nature; Wales Coast Path; Coastal Tourism; and Sustainable Tourism. All six projects are jointly enhancing and improving the attractiveness of existing, new, natural and manmade facilities, including the development of centres of excellence, marinas, cycle and walking trails, coastal footpaths as well as ancillary services and facilities, all improving and enhancing enjoyment and access to the coast and countryside.

Destination Management is another collaborative approach Visit Wales has developed, to create a system where all activities and services impacting visitors and their enjoyment of a destination are coordinated. The approach is not prescriptive but designed to be led from the bottom up, in partnership, by organisations and individuals within the destination to create an agreed Destination Management Plan which identifies quality gaps and future priorities.

“The great prospect in Wales going forward is to collectively work on the challenges and opportunities sustainable tourism brings, joining up our thinking and pursuing outcomes that enhance the wellbeing of Wales.”

Stephanie Woodward,
Senior Programme Development and
Partnerships Manager

What changed

The partnership approach means strategies and actions are developed together and ensures a joined up strategy and action plan is formulated.

The Sustainable Tourism Forum enabled organisations to collectively recognise the key challenges to more tourism in Wales and which organisations needed to work more closely together going forward. In 2009 two funding pots of £35 million were secured to deliver sustainable coastal tourism projects.

There has also been significant progress against the strategic action plan delivered between 2009 -2012, overseen by a pan-Wales multi-stakeholder, Wales Coastal Tourism Forum and steering group. The opening of the Wales Coast Path was a key project delivered during this plan's life and demonstrated a strong working relationship between tourism and partners, where Visit Wales led the development of a marketing and communications strategy for the path.

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The Green Sea Partnership is another example showing the benefits of collaboration. Since its launch in 1996, the partnership has been a key driver in quality in coastal tourism in Wales, securing two successive EU projects via the E4G Coastal Tourism Project. In 1995 Wales had just 2 Blue Flag beaches, a guarantee of high quality management, facilities and water quality, and in 2012 it rose to 43. The Green Sea Partnership has also been very influential in helping local authorities work together, splitting funding for mutual benefits across county borders.

What obstacles existed

Due to the diverse nature of the tourism sector in Wales, it is sometimes challenging to link up effectively with all key stakeholders in the industry, particularly at the local level. Through Destination

Management and partnerships, the barriers to cross sector collaborative working are shrinking, and the ability to get more detailed local industry knowledge is growing.

Another challenge for the tourist industry in Wales is promoting sustainable transport, because it involves so many people, organisations, and infrastructure spread right across Wales. Working widely and across boundaries, Visit Wales has been working with other Welsh Government departments and stakeholders via the Sustainable Transport and Tourism group, to raise awareness of these challenges and work collaboratively to develop projects.

What they learned

Aligning different departments' and organisations' targets, goals and strategic visions is an important step to getting a joined up collaborative approach.

Working with Cardiff Business School, Visit Wales came up with a key set of indicators and outcomes for their Sustainable Tourism Action Plan that aligned with wider Welsh Government sustainability objectives.

Tourism, like sustainability, is a subject that crosses all sectors. It has an important impact on the economy, the environment and communities across Wales and so provides the opportunity to bring all the sectors together in a joined up approach.

“Identifying the outcomes you want and ensuring everyone is on the same page is so important. At the end of the day the results we all want should be the same because we are all talking about a sustainable Wales.”

Stephanie Woodward,
Senior Programme Development and
Partnerships Manager

Contact and Links

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Sustainable Tourism : A Framework for Wales
Destination Management

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