



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23 SEPTEMBER 2021

RHONDDA CYNON TAF TOURISM STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING (CLLR ROBERT BEVAN)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out the results of the public consultation exercise carried out on the draft Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Tourism Strategy.
- 1.2 In addition, this report seeks approval from the Cabinet to formalise the draft RCT Tourism Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the responses to the public consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the draft RCT Tourism Strategy and determine whether any amendments are required to the proposals, other than those already adopted into the Strategy.
- 2.2 Approve the draft RCT Tourism Strategy (subject to any amendments that are required as per 2.1 above) as the official strategic document that will underpin the Council's tourism priorities and efforts.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To deliver upon the Council's commitment to develop and promote RCT as a visitor destination, as set out in RCT Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024, "*Making a Difference*" to develop a tourism offer that encourages people to come to the County Borough and includes attractions such as

the Rhondda and Abernant Tunnels, the Zip World Tower, Royal Mint Experience, The National Lido for Wales and a Welsh Coal Mining Experience at the Rhondda Heritage Park. To support businesses to develop a range of complementary services to the attractions in RCT including offering accommodation in our town centres, such as boutique hotels, quality bed and breakfast and Airbnb locations.

- 3.2 To produce a key strategic document and set of priorities, that focus on delivering this commitment for future years, from which action plans can be produced, and resources allocated to deliver the identified and agreed priorities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Between 2014 and 2019, Wales welcomed record numbers of visitors. This is reflected in RCT's visitor numbers, with 1.5 million-day visitors in 2019 and more than 500,000 overnight stays, contributing to just over £179 million to the RCT economy. Over 9% of the workforce in Wales were employed via the tourism sector, with 2000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) roles supported by tourism in RCT.
- 4.2 It is clear that tourism has the potential to be the main driver of the local economy and source of employment in certain parts of the County Borough, and that a formalised Strategy is required to underpin and direct all tourism related operations.
- 4.3 On 23 July 2019 members from the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee provided comment and approved the proposed direction of the RCT Tourism Strategy which replaced Destination Rhondda Cynon Taf 2014 - 2020.
- 4.4 As a result a draft Tourism Strategy was drafted with the overall objective as set out below.
- 4.5 To maximise the opportunities that marrying our fantastic landscape and heritage with the changing face of tourism presents, the draft RCT Tourism Strategy recommended targeting efforts in the following areas:
 1. Product & Attractions
 2. Accommodation
 3. Accessibility, Infrastructure & Connectivity
 4. Skills & Employment
 5. Experience
- 4.6 On 24 March 2020 a Delegated Decision was made to pass the draft RCT Tourism Strategy for public consultation. However, it was on

condition that any form of consultation would only commence when it was deemed appropriate in light of the situation posed by COVID-19.

- 4.7 The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were global, causing a complete, and in some cases, devastating shut down of the Tourism and Hospitality sector, and this meant that it was not deemed appropriate for public consultation to take place until 17 May 2021.
- 4.8 On 17 May 2021 a five-week consultation was launched, which asked residents, business owners and visitors for their thoughts in relation to the content of the draft RCT Tourism Strategy. The consultation closed on 18 June 2021.
- 4.9 On 20 July 2021 the draft RCT Tourism Strategy went to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee, where it was agreed the Strategy could be reported to the Cabinet for final approval.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment including socio-economic duty has been carried out and this can be found at Appendix A.
- 5.2 The review panel agreed that the development of the Visit RCT (Draft) Tourism Strategy will promote equality and diversity, by opening opportunities for tourism businesses to engage with protected characteristics by gaining an understanding of what benefits can be made to welcome a more diverse tourism trade.
- 5.3 The membership to the Visit RCT Hub is free and will be used as a vehicle to disseminate key information to tourism businesses on best practice and initiative on ensuring equality, diversity and socio-economic duty is met to create a More Equal Wales.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been carried out and this can be found at Appendix B.
- 6.2 The review panel agreed that this impact assessment considers how it could increase positive impacts on the Welsh language. The strategy already references the Welsh language at various stages, highlighting its importance to us as a Council and our local partners as we drive forward our tourism offer.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 As previously mentioned, on the 24 March 2020, a Delegated Decision was made to initiate a public consultation exercise on the draft RCT Tourism Strategy.
- 7.2 Below is a summary of the key findings of the consultation on the proposed RCT Tourism Strategy. The full consultation report can be seen in Appendix C. Overall, the consultation shows that respondents are supportive of the draft Tourism Strategy and its content and welcome the proposals.

Draft RCT Tourism Strategy Consultation

- 7.3 The 5-week consultation period ran from the 17 May 2021 – 18 June 2021. The main method of data capture was an online questionnaire. Supplementary to this, a dedicated email address and contact number was supplied via the RCT Consultation website page, that could be used if respondents did not or could not complete the survey via the online questionnaire.
- 7.4 Promotion of the consultation was focussed on residents, business owners, tourism stakeholders and visitors. Both targeted and organic social media campaigns were employed, together with a dedicated press release and digital promotion via the Council's website. Tourism related partners and businesses were also contacted and supplied with a direct web link to the online questionnaire.
- 7.5 The summary of the feedback is as follows:
- 321 responses to the online consultation were received.
 - 55% of respondents said they were responding as a resident of RCT, whilst 40% said they were responding as a visitor.
 - 87% of respondents said they either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' with the vision for the RCT Tourism Strategy.
 - Respondents were asked to provide comments for their answer whether they agreed with the vision. The overarching, main comments talked about RCT having many areas of natural beauty, that as a destination RCT has lots of potential and that we need to build upon and promote our experiences and attractions.
 - 90% of respondents said they either 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' with the statement that RCT's 'landscape', 'culture' and 'heritage' are our key strengths when looking to develop and drive forward a tourism offer.
 - Respondents were asked to provide further comments on their chosen answer to the above question. Of the comments provided, the main themes showed an overall agreement with the statement

with praise being given in particular to the landscape and outdoor spaces on offer within RCT.

- Respondents were directed to the 5 key themes that are identified within the draft Strategy as priority areas to focus upon, Products and Attractions, Accommodation, Accessibility, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Skills and Employment, Experience. Respondents were asked if they felt there were any other themes they felt should be considered. Of the responses received to this question, the common themes that were identified were “Advertisement / Promotion”, “Environmental/Sustainability Considerations”, however it worth noting these elements are referenced within the draft Strategy but not as dedicated priority area.
- Respondents were given details of the objectives for each of the themes identified and asked whether they agree with these. The results show that the majority of respondents (Over 89%) agreed with each of the aims outlined.

7.6 Following the consultation exercise, despite the large majority of feedback being positive and in agreement with the contents of the Strategy, some common underlying themes were noted, and as such the draft RCT Tourism Strategy has been updated to take these into account. These include reference to:

- ‘Motorhomes’, whereby an inclusion has been inserted within the ‘Accommodation’ theme, to capture their rise in popularity.
- ‘Marketing and promotion’, to signify the importance of more targeted campaigns that promote RCT as a destination, which utilise the availability of digital tactics such as social media.

7.7 Other amends have also been included to reflect key updates from when the Strategy was initially written, such as reference to:

- ‘Zip World Tower’, as the visitor attraction is now open to the general public, and this is the correct brand for the product/site.
- The Council’s Corporate Plan “Making a Difference” (2020 – 2024), and it’s tourism focused priorities, which replaced the previous Corporate Plan “The Way Ahead” (2016 – 2020).
- Up-to-date and relevant statistics for both the Employer’s Skill Survey Wales Report (2019) and Global Adventure Tourism Marketing Report (2020 – 2030), replacing previous versions, from which statistics had been referenced.
- ‘Bryn Gobaith Farm’ under the ‘Experience’ theme, has been removed, as it’s offering no longer fits with the context of this Strategy.

The updated draft RCT Tourism Strategy (Welsh) can be seen at Appendix D and the draft RCT Tourism Strategy (English) can be seen at Appendix E.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications in formalising the RCT Tourism Strategy, but as the opportunities are developed, the financial implications will be fully assessed, and where appropriate reported and the necessary approvals sought.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no current legal implications, but as the opportunities are developed, the legal implications will be fully assessed.

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

- 10.1 The delivery of this draft RCT Tourism Strategy will contribute to the Council's corporate priorities:

- People – are independent, healthy, and successful.
- Places – where people are proud to live, work, and play.
- Prosperity - creating the opportunity for people & businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential & prosper.

- 10.2 RCT Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024, "*Making a Difference*" identifies positioning RCT as a visitor destination, developing a tourism offer that encourages people to come to the County Borough and includes attractions such as the Rhondda and Abernant Tunnels, the Zip World Tower, Royal Mint Experience, The National Lido for Wales and a Welsh Coal Mining Experience at the Rhondda Heritage Park. It identifies that we as a Council will support businesses to develop a range of complementary services including offering accommodation in our town centres, such as boutique hotels, quality bed and breakfast and Airbnb locations.

- 10.3 The draft RCT Tourism Strategy's primary objective is to increase and sustain the economic growth of tourism in RCT, encouraging skills development and providing well paid secure employment for the local workforce. Tourism product development, especially in the outdoors (trails development, for example) will have an associated outcome of providing wellbeing opportunities for residents, enabling greater access to their outdoors and green leisure corridors.

- 10.4 The Sustainable Development Principle and five ways of working have been incorporated into the RCT Tourism Strategy in the following ways:

- Long term - Immediate short-term tourism developments shall take into account long term requirements. For example, well paid, sustainable job creation and the consideration of biodiversity and eco systems management within tourism product planning
- Integration - Integration of wellbeing plans and goals from different organisations will be taken into account by undertaking partnership working. Wellbeing Tourism has been identified as a theme to explore further within the Strategy
- Collaboration & Involvement - The Tourism Strategy will involve a number of relevant partners and organisations in its delivery and collaborate with them to ensure strategic objectives are met.
- Prevention - By working with the right people at the right time, as identified in the “Next Steps” section of the Tourism Strategy, we will seek to mitigate against any risks and problems presenting themselves to achieve the best possible wellbeing outcomes for our communities by implementing actions to deliver against the strategic tourism objectives

10.5 This approach makes a direct contribution to the seven national well-being goals, in particular:

- A Healthier Wales (allowing greater access to the outdoors through trails and product development)
- A Prosperous Wales (providing an environment within which home-grown tourism businesses can flourish)
- Resilient and cohesive communities (the unique selling point of our Destination is our communities and the warm welcome they provide to visitors. The Tourism Strategy will support the vibrancy of such communities through localised infrastructure, connectivity and product development)
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language (our culture will be celebrated as a reason to visit RCT and opportunities have been identified for bespoke Welsh Language tourism packages to be developed).

10.6 The Tourism Strategy will also seek to address priorities within:

- Prosperity For All: The National Strategy 2017
- The Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- Cardiff Capital Region City Deal & Valleys Task Force Delivery Plans
- Our Cwm Taf – Public Service Board (PSB) Well-Being Plan 2018-2023
- Rural Development Programme (RDP) – Cwm Taf Local Development Plan

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 A RCT Tourism Strategy has been produced, which highlights key tourism related priorities and will be used to underpin all work and effort, ensuring a coordinated and integrated approach – this is currently in draft format.
- 11.2 This report sets out the results of the public consultation exercise carried out on the draft RCT Tourism Strategy, identifying that overall, respondents are supportive of the Strategy and its contents, and welcome the proposals.
- 11.3 The draft RCT Tourism Strategy has been updated to incorporate some minor amends (brought about from comments put forward during the consultation and from Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee) and it is recommended in this report that the Cabinet endorses this Strategy document.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Contact Officer:

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER
COUNCILLOR ROBERT BEVAN**

Item:

Background Papers

Officer to contact: Ian Christopher, Strategic Manager (07795 391 855)