

Consultation Report

Draft Tourism Strategy

June 2021



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the consultation.
- The purpose of the consultation was to gather views on the Draft Tourism Strategy proposal.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 17th May 2021 – 18th June 2021.
- 321 responses to the online consultation were received.
- 55% of respondents said they were responding as a resident of Rhondda Cynon Taf (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 tourism strategy.
- Respondents were asked to provide comments for their answer whether they agreed with the vision. The following are the overarching, main themes identified in the open responses,
 - Agree: RCT has many areas of natural beauty
 - Agree: RCT needs to build upon and promote its experiences and attractions
 - Agree: RCT has lots of potential to build upon tourism offers
- 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 overarching common themes that were identified are as follows:
 - Advertisement / Promotion of tourism offers: A number of comments identified the requirement to boldly advertise and promote the tourism

offers within RCT to a wider audience. The use of media / tv and a focus on tourists entering via airports were also identified.

- Environmental considerations / sustainability of tourism offers: There were also a number of comments that noted the requirement to ensure that the environmental impact of tourism is considered as well as ensuring the sustainability of tourism attractions.
- Hospitality Sector / Accommodation: A number of comments highlighted the importance of focusing on providing suitable accommodation offers within the borough. A number of respondents were owners of motorhomes and a particular theme emerged from these respondents in relation to having adequate spaces to park vehicles and access facilities within RCT.
- 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.
- Respondents were invited to provide any comments in relation to their selection of answers in the above question. The following are the overarching, main themes identified in the open responses:-
 - Accommodation: Several comments were again provided by owners of motorhomes for this section. The comments again highlighted requirements for suitable locations to park vehicles and have access to facilities close to attractions.
 - Accessibility / Infrastructure: There were also a number of comments that highlighted the importance of having tourism offers that were easily accessible across the borough although the impacts of infrastructure on the environment and a desire to ensure the natural beauty of areas remains unaffected also came through in these comments.
 - Inclusion of local people: A number of comments made by residents responding to the survey indicated a desire for tourism to be inclusive of residents and not solely for the requirements of visitors from outside the area.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a consultation on the Draft Tourism Strategy proposal.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines the background to the proposal and the draft vision that was consulted on.
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology used.
- 1.4 Section 4 presents an analysis of the consultation results.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Over the last five years, Wales has 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. Over 9% of the workforce in Wales is now employed in tourism. It is one of the country's fastest growing sectors and it is estimated that tourism was worth just over £179 million to the RCT economy in 2019 and employed more than 2000 people. It is clear that tourism has the potential to be the main driver of the local economy and source of employment in large parts of the County Borough.
- 2.2 Evidently the tourism industry is changing. People are moving away from traditional package holidays and instead are increasingly piecing together their own getaways, predominantly through the internet, seeking an 'experience' based break or holiday with the ubiquitous opportunity for a once in a lifetime selfie.
- 2.3 To maximise the opportunities that marrying our fantastic landscape and heritage with the changing face of tourism presents, the Draft Tourism Strategy recommends that we target our efforts in the following areas:
 - 1. Product & Attractions
 - 2. Accommodation
 - 3. Accessibility, Infrastructure & Connectivity
 - 4. Skills & Employment
 - 5. Experience

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The purpose of the consultation was to gather views on the Draft Tourism Strategy proposal.
- 3.2 The consultation period ran from 17th May 2021 – 18th June 2021.
- 3.3 An online survey was designed and made available via the council’s consultation webpages. Social Media was used to promote the survey and shared via the councils Twitter page. Contact was made directly with businesses signed up to the Tourism Hub.
- 3.4 321 responses to the questionnaire were received. The results are outlined in this report.

4 CONSULTATION RESULTS

- 4.1 Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the vision for tourism set out in this strategy?

“To establish RCT as the premier destination in the UK for ‘experience’ based visits and vacations, showcasing our first class landscape, culture and heritage.”

The results show that 87% of respondents either Strongly Agree or Agree with the vision.

To what extent do you agree with the vision for tourism set out in this strategy?

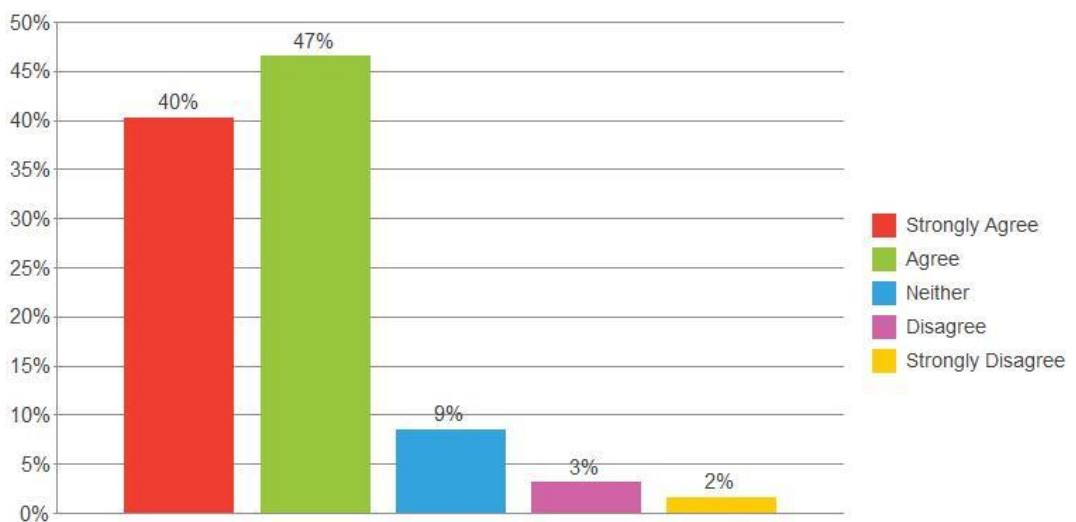


Figure 1 – Agreement with vision for strategy

- 4.2 Respondents were asked to provide any comments in relation to their answer and of those received, the following themes emerged:

Natural beauty of area

Comments were made highlighting the advantages the natural landscapes provide in RCT. Respondents felt that the variety and geography of the borough was a unique selling point. Comments included:

“This area has an outstanding geography and such variety, most people are unaware of this as they may have had no reason to visit. Drawing the attention of the media through events and experience-based activities would draw attention to what we have to offer. Sports events, cycling, triathlons, marathons and music or food festivals appeal to lots of age groups.”

“Our landscape & countryside is second to none.”

“RCT must play to its strengths, dynamic, countryside, mountains fresh and the weather.”

“We have majestic mountains, wonderful waterfalls and spectacular scenery. All of it easily accessed from the main towns.”

Experiences / Attractions valuable asset

Another theme that emerged in this section was that RCT should build upon the attractions in place and strive to provide good experiences and a variety of experiences based on the resources the local areas have to offer.

“We have to have product which will encourage more than just a day visit to the area, which means several large attractions to keep visitors busy enough to stay and experience the environment and communities over a sustained period.”

“Have holidayed for many years with my family in the French Alps and often commented that we could be doing similar at home and that we should be doing more to promote and use our landscape etc. Activities in France included paragliding, canyoning, white water rafting, treetops, zip wires, gorge walking/scrambling, cycling, walking, waterfalls, paddle boarding, museums, world war heritage sites and graves etc.”

“I love the lido and the views for walks”

“People are drawn to new and exciting experiences and days out. For example, beautiful scenery or wild swimming spots posted on Instagram attract many people to go out and experience this for themselves.”

Potential to build upon

There were also a number of comments that showed agreement with the aims of the strategy but also indicated that the areas within RCT that had lots of potential to be improved and built upon.

“I was born in RCT and have returned on many an occasion. I know that there is lots to do and see in the area and what wonderful scenery there is to be seen. Encouraging tourism is key to re-building local business especially now post-Covid.”

“There is a lot of unused potential (e.g. lack of marked trails) in the hills surrounding the Rhondda and towns which are in need of refurbishments.”

“RCT is a gorgeous part of the world and can offer a great deal. Investment in the local infrastructure needs to be made to match this vision.”

- 4.3 Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agree that RCT’s landscape, culture and heritage are our key strengths when looking to develop and drive forward a tourism offer. The majority of respondents (90%) ‘Strongly Agreed’ or ‘Agreed’ with this statement.

To what extent do you agree that RCT’s ‘landscape’, ‘culture’ and ‘heritage’ are our key strengths when looking to develop and drive forward a tourism offer?

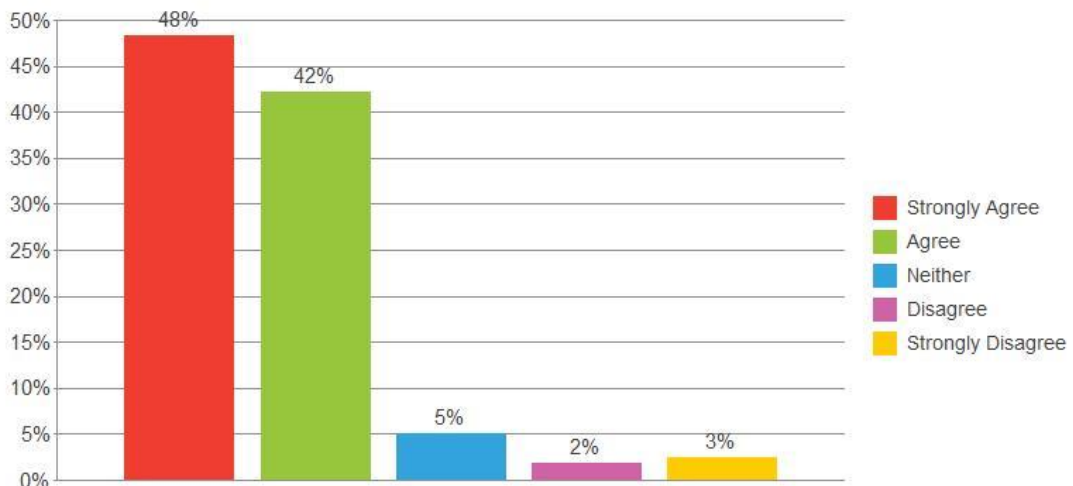


Figure 2 – Agreement with RCT’s key strengths

Of those that strongly agree or agreed, some comments included:

“I Completely agree with this. We do have a beautiful landscape, although certain areas could do with a clean-up, and an interesting heritage and culture. We should definitely take advantage of this.”

“RCT has so much mining heritage and amazing scenery that could be promoted.”

“During lockdown and having to stay local I have found so many additional places of beauty in the landscape that I didn’t know about before. Past culture of mining especially is very interesting to me and I have always loved going for a day out to learn more.”

“We have beautiful landscapes and scenery and this should be developed alongside the historical events linked to them.”

- 4.4 There were some comments that agreed with the statement, however they also indicated further ways in which they felt RCT could enhance its offer.

“Our countryside is stunning and awe inspiring. But our people litter and don’t value where we live. This needs to change and there needs to be a stronger litter picking workforce...”

“The area has the foundation to build on I agree. However, you need to step up and promote what’s on offer, poor signage throughout RCT is an issue.”

“RCT has all 3 categories in abundance, although awareness across the rest of the UK and Europe is very low. Other Celtic nations, particularly Scotland and Ireland have established both national and regional identities based on these 3 categories, which are recognisable worldwide but Wales and RCT have so much to offer but often overlooked for Tourism.”

- 4.5 Respondents were shown the 5 key themes that have been identified within the draft strategy as priority areas to focus upon and were asked if there were any others they felt should be considered.

Of the comments received in this section, the following themes emerged:

Advertising / Promotion

Comments were made in relation to the promotion and advertisement of the tourism offers within RCT. Some comments indicated the benefits of ensuring that a wide range of events are held and promoted widely. There were also comments made regarding the promotion / signposting of local attractions.

“Promote Big events to draw people into the area who may then come back in the future, cycling or running events, live comedy or music festivals. We need a Greenman or Food festival like Abergavenny, Real ale Octoberfest idea.”

“Signposting Walking routes and signage natural beauty community.”

“Community. Engaging more with local communities to encourage better collaboration that will in-turn produce better outcomes..”

“Promotion of all the above.”

“Advertising and showing people what is out there.”

Environment / Sustainability

The environment and ensuring that tourism offers are sustainable and with a focus on nature and the ecology of local areas also emerged as a common theme in the comments for this section.

“Environmental impact. We need keep all these things sustainable for future generations..”

“Ensuring that it is eco- friendly and sustainable.”

“Sustainability with a focus on reducing the impact on the environment of encouraging mass tourism.”

“Sustainability should be number one - promoting active travel, cycle parking at every attraction and disincentive to car driving.”

“Ecology. Rewilding and reforestation could add to the attractions of the landscape”

Hospitality / Accommodation (including Motorhomes)

There were also comments relating to the hospitality and accommodation offers provided within RCT and the importance of ensuring these offers are well supported and promoted.

“Food is an important part of the visitor experience and there is a lack of appealing places to eat near many really beautiful outdoor areas.”

“Where does hospitality fit in this - lots of good pubs and restaurants as well as cafe's.”

“Accommodation is sadly lacking, infrastructure awful..”

“More hotels need to bring people in”

“Hospitality - encouraging local businesses & accommodation providers to develop their hospitality skills in relation to welcoming visitors and helping them with information and advice. Becoming ambassador’s for the region!”

4.6 There were also a number of comments made in relation to accommodation provision for motor homeowners.

“More diverse types of accommodation are needed, I would like to see a dedicated motor home park”.

“Facilities for motorhomes and camper and near to town centres. These tourists can provide a year-round source of income for businesses and tend to prefer more central parking due to the fact that they are much less manoeuvrable than the cars which tow caravans. Hence remote campsites are much less suitable for their needs.”

“Under ‘Accommodation’, please bear in mind the needs of the Motor homer, which does not mean campsites. What we need is suitable places to park during the day (so that we can spend time and money in towns and attractions) and continental-style Aires to stay overnight and/or empty our waste. Please refer to the CAMPfRA website.”

“Campsites and motorhome parking for short stops.”

4.7 Respondents were given details of the objectives for each of the themes identified and asked whether they agree with these. The results shown that the majority of respondents (over 89%) agreed with each of the aims outlined.

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't know (%)
Product and Attractions – “build upon our existing visitor products and attractions to develop a number of high-quality unique visitor offerings, that can create itineraries and packages, to provide short and long stay opportunities.”	93.2	4.2	2.6
Accommodation – “increase the amount of accommodation available in the County Borough which needs to be of high quality, varied in nature and will also appeal to a wide range of visitors.”	89.7	5.8	4.5

Accessibility, Infrastructure and Connectivity – “develop transport links and public transport availability, car parking, signage, accessible facilities and an understanding how they interconnect.”	97.1	1.6	1.3
Skills and Employment – “encouraging the development of tourism related skills and supporting the creation of well paid, secure jobs within the industry for local residents.”	95.1	2.3	2.6
Experience – “provide a first class, positive and unique experience which visitors will want to repeat and tell others about.”	97.4	1.0	1.6

Figure 3 – Agreement with objectives for each theme

- 4.8 Respondents were asked to provide any comments in relation to their answers for this section. Of the comments received, the following themes emerged:

Accommodation (incl. Motorhome)

The provision of suitable accommodation emerged as a theme in this section. Once again, the provision of accommodation / suitable locations for motorhome owners also became a prevalent theme.

“We need more, good quality accommodation within RCT.”

“Accommodation is in very short supply and needs to be improved to keep people in RCT for more than day trippers. If they can stay local they will shop and eat local too.”

“Accommodation is not that readily available, are there any camp sites or glamping sites?”

“Remember that accommodation isn't just hotels, B&Bs, campsites - it means accommodation for motorhome tourism too.”

Accessibility / Infrastructure

The accessibility of the local area and the need for visitors to be able to easily access any tourism offers was highlighted by a number of comments in this section. There were also a number of comments made in relation to the impacts any changes to infrastructure may have on the environment and the number of cars being used in local areas with an

emphasis on the requirement for adequate public transport options for residents and visitors.

“Accessibility throughout the Rhondda needs to be urgently looked into. Lack of public car parks at treorchy for visitors/shoppers.”

“Accessibility needs to be in line with Wales Gov climate change strategy. Walking and cycling most important, public transport next, with private car journeys last. This applies to staff and supplier journeys as well as visitor journeys.”

“Ensure that infrastructure and connectivity has a focus on being able to use transport into RCT rather than out of RCT to the likes of Cardiff, Swansea etc.”

“As much as possible, travel by private transport should be discouraged. We don't want more roads and traffic.”

“Public transport links are especially important as it would be beneficial to the area as a whole to improve these.”

Inclusion of local people

There were a number of comments made in relation to the importance of involving local people and gaining the buy in of local residents as a vital factor in ensuring any tourism offers are successful. The importance of jobs being accessed by local people also emerged as a theme in this section. Some comments included:

“I feel that the creation of jobs for local people is of great importance.”

“If this is to be done well and we are to attract the right people into the tourism roles from the first contact person (the most important) to the, waiter/waitress, B&B owner or tourism product manager then all have to have the same welcoming ethos and be trained how best to serve the customer and this can't be done on the cheap. All roles need to be trained and paid a good wage so that the best people are attracted to the jobs..”

“In terms of experience, using the local population to converse with tourists will make an experience more memorable. For example advertising new activities to residents as well as tourists will ensure residents will meet tourists as residents will then go to these new or improved activities.”

“Attractions...need to be accessible to locals.”

- 4.9 Respondents were asked to provide any other comments they may have in relation to the draft strategy. The following themes emerged in the comments:

Promotion of the area

The benefits of promoting the offer available within RCT and the importance of advertising events and attractions was highlighted by a number of comments. Suggestions were made for avenues to further promote the tourism offers in the area through airports and utilising media outlets.

“We must sell & project ourselves with positive words and images and stop talking about deprivation and coal. There are only an aging small population that remember coal yet we’re still banging on about it. we must advertise what beauty & nature & community we have.”

“Advertise your amazing Lido and initiatives like the Big Run - both wheelchair accessible and welcoming !”

“It is a really exciting plan, hope the tunnel goes ahead in Abernant! Will need more coverage on the media, Weatherman walking style or wildlife programs to introduce the area to the wider world. Have noticed S4C do a lot of outdoor activities coverage, be great to get them on board. Good luck!”

“Let’s promote our fabulous Rhondda at Cardiff and Bristol airport, Cardiff rail station, offer easy transport links and sightseeing packages to visitors including walking tours, half a day, full day, two sat, weeklong etc.”

“I live in Rhondda Cynon Taff and it’s a beautiful place with a beautiful name and it needs to be front and centre of all literature promoting the area!”

Motorhomes

Owners of motorhomes who responded to the survey made a number of comments once again highlighting their requests for the provision of parking / facilities to access in the borough.

“Please consider the use of Aires - overnight parking for self-contained motorhomes, with or without basic services, for a modest fee. Aires can be sited on car parks which are not needed at night (e.g. car parks at visitor attractions). They provide a parking space only, so do not allow the use of tents, awnings, BBQs etc. However Aires encourage motorhomers to stay in an area thus accessing visitor attractions and local amenities and boosting the local economy.”

“It would be great to see your area activity encouraging Motorcaravan tourists by providing ‘Aires’ as an alternative to traditional campsites. These can easily be set up by allowing overnight parking of Motorcaravans in car parks that would otherwise empty overnight.”

“Offer a range of parking and servicing options for motorhome and campervan users, who are self contained and wanting easy and good value places to stay where we can spend our time and money supporting your region's business.”

“I am a Motorhome owner and have visited your area when my son was at university in Pontypridd. I struggled to find anywhere to park up for the night when we came down to see him. A Motorhome aire which consists of somewhere to park with access to fresh water and toilet emptying facility would be extremely useful and would bring in a huge number of Motorhomers.”

Agree / Support for strategy

There were a number of comments highlighting respondent's support and enthusiasm for the aims and objectives set out in the strategy. These were from residents and visitors.

“As a very passionate 'RCT' man its really good to see and feel RCT's ambition to make it happen. Why can't we be up there with the best. The legacy of a first-class environment will be job security and bright future for the county.”

“I think as a whole it is a fantastic project if done thoroughly and correctly.”

“I think it is a really good strategy to revive the economy of a beautiful area.”

“Very satisfied by the suggestions and look forwards to seeing them come to fruition.”

“We have as much to offer as many other destinations in Wales. This is very promising for the area.”

“I think it is excellent and very well thought-out. I hope that tourism in the area really takes off.”

“Excellent idea to promote tourism as the area returns to its natural beauty and landscape.”

- 4.10 Respondents were asked to identify whether they were a resident / visitor / business or other. The results show that the majority of respondents were residents in RCT (55%) although a high number were responding as visitors (40%).

Are you responding as a:

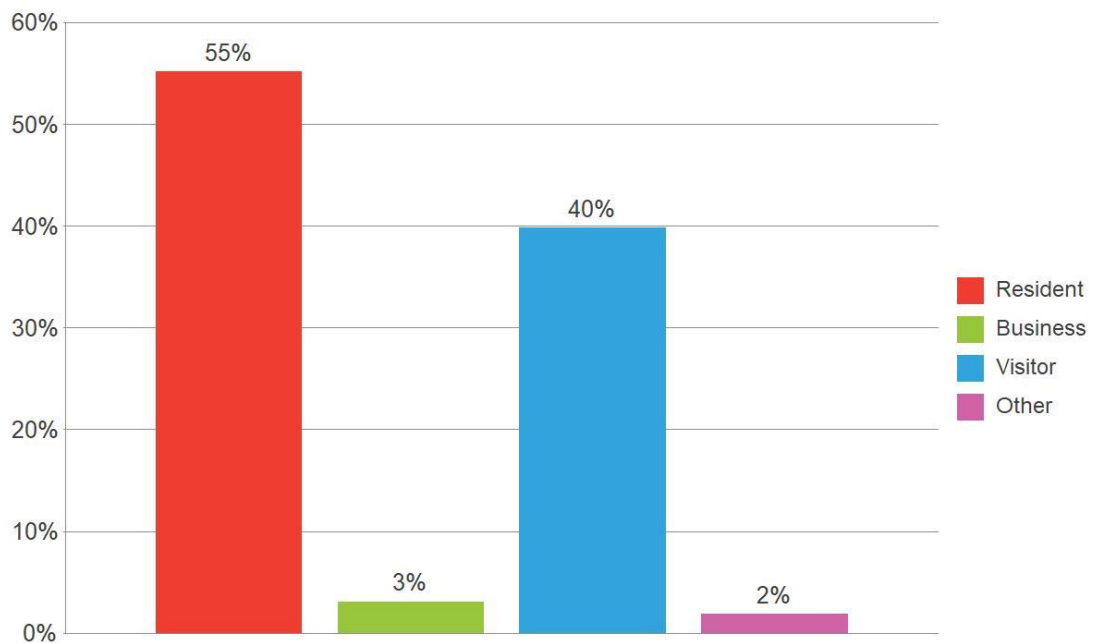


Figure 4 – Respondent information

Equalities

4.11 Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics like the ones above. Respondents were asked whether or not the strategy would affect them because of their:

- Gender,
- Age,
- Ethnicity,
- Disability,
- Sexuality,
- Religion / belief,
- Gender identity,
- Relationship status,
- Pregnancy and
- Preferred language

4.12 Comments received were split into the following categories and a selection of comments can be found below:

Gender

“ safety - being female there is always a security aspect to be concerned over. I love walking Clydach Lakes and you get to know local walkers. If*

*we attract tourists to the lakes how exactly will we ensure walkers stay safe? As we know from recent events, women's safety is a matter we need to address. I would love to see some additional security measures up on the walk from the bottom lake to the top lake * safety is a concern. If we attract tourists we need to ensure and additional people at places used by residents will remain safe...."*

"i'm transgender, toilets are always a concern. gender neutral bathrooms should be important in all our tourism places."

Accessibility / Disabilities

"Accessibility and a changing places toilet would be great for everyone"

"Accommodation is often not accessible, parking and public transport options are a long way from tourist facilities. Pontypridd train station has awful access for disabled, as well as being an intimidating place for women, older & younger people, etc."

"Accessibility is a big factor with public transport links"

"Disability: Ample accessible parking at attractions is important to me"

"Ensure any employment created is accessible, available and inclusive to all of the above"

"You have successfully addressed disability with your accessibility at the Lido / Ponty Park ! Thank you !"

Welsh language

"Welsh should be promoted and everyone included regardless of any differences"

"Stop putting everything in Welsh it really puts off our English friends they find it demeaning!"

"As a Welsh learner I would like to see more use of the Welsh language in RCT, I feel this is another aspect of culture and heritage that visitors are often unaware of when visiting Wales and could give other UK residents and Europeans a wider understanding of its history."

"I think it is important that the Welsh language is promoted during this. For example, if there are going to be additional signs out up, they should have both English and Welsh on them."

Sexuality / LGBTQ+

"If the strategy focused more on working with communities then it would be able to recognise where those with different characteristics could play

more of a role. For example there is a strong lgbtq+ community here... is their voice represented in some of the thinking behind events which could encourage visitors?"

Welsh Language

- 4.13 Under the Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on the Welsh Language. Respondents were asked if they felt the strategy could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language.
- 4.14 They were also asked to comment on how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased. A selection of comments can be found below:

Signage, Information and Welsh speaking staff

"After living for some years in a country that had signs in a dual language (Canada) you need to strongly encourage the Welsh language culture"

"All information and staff should be bilingual, with Welsh as first option."

"Besides signage in Welsh you might want to consider Welsh speaking guides at the tourist centres"

"Continue to provide Welsh and English mediums for communications, signage and perhaps also more opportunities to educate locals and visitors about the Welsh language."

"Ensure all tourist sites are bilingual and spaces for Welsh speaking communities are created. As a Welsh learner it would be great to access this information at tourist sites to help my language learning and for new spaces/sites to be created for the Welsh speaking community I can participate in"

Sports

"A positive would be to help those language with popular Welsh phrases and/history of an area! Well developed sports clubs are also a way of making improvements as lots of people visit for game days and when they see the start of the clubs would not want to return !"

Heritage and Culture

"Although I understand the push for Welsh as a language, I value Wales as a place more. Bringing tourism to the area and allowing people the

opportunity to learn about our heritage and communities should be a priority over what language the toilet signs are.”

“Anything which promotes the Welsh language is to be applauded. Any opportunities to introduce visitors to the Welsh language and Welsh culture would be great. Having lived in Wales, and having Welsh-speaking family, I know that some visitors see the use of the Welsh language as some sort of barrier, failing to recognise that it is a living language and the first language of many residents. Providing information about the culture would be beneficial.”

Promotion of the Welsh Language

“As a non welsh speaker, I think it’s a positive to promote the language but not to impact on opportunities of non welsh speakers.”

“..... I believe the strategy should positively impact and promote the Welsh language and its historical significance. It’s language is Wales unique selling point, it differentiates us from the other parts of the UK, we need to weave this into our tourism industry to promote and develop Wales as a unique country with its own identity, culture, history and landscape.”

“Every opportunity should be taken in delivering the objectives to promote the Welsh Language e.g. signage, bilingual tours, welsh history”

“Foreign visitors often expect us to speak Welsh and are interested in the language would be good to promote it where we can”

“Gives an opportunity to promote the Welsh language in the borough . I think using Welsh more would be beneficial to the tourism offering .”

“Having just returned from a holiday in North Wales I can say I found the promotion of the Welsh language & culture there to be both fulsome and a unique selling point that was appreciated by visitors (English & Welsh alike) and definitely a positive!”

Other

“Encourage S4C to make programs in RCT.”

“I don’t know if it would have a positive or negative effect on Welsh language; I would hope it can be positive to some degree by promoting Welsh culture and identity to enhance the experience and educate visitors to the area”

“I don’t think the Welsh Language would be treated less favourably and I’m sure opportunities for those people whose native tongue is Welsh should be encouraged if they wish to speak the language.”

“If the strategy is implemented mindfully then it could increase opportunities to promote Welsh and Welsh language learning. The usual bilingual signage etc helps. Promoting Welsh food and menus and local sourcing could help culturally too.”