

SWANSEA BAY FUTURES (SBF) NETWORK MEETING: ACTION NOTES

4.30pm, Wednesday, 16th June, 2010

Dawn Lyle introduced the concept of the SBF Network to attendees to the meeting, describing how the network would be a forum and action group to promote the Swansea Bay region.

Items discussed:

Swansea Bay Accessibility

There is a requirement to overcome the perception that Swansea Bay is remote and difficult to get to by public transport when this is in fact, not the case. There is an hourly train from London and a frequent train from Manchester, as well as good bus links within Swansea Bay and the new ferry link between Swansea and Cork. Somehow, we need to spread the message of the accessibility of Swansea Bay for both business and tourism.

First Impressions

It was highlighted that signage, such as the 'Bay of Life' panels installed in Cardiff Airport, could be used at key city gateway points, including the ferry terminal, the new High Street Station development and within the new bus station.

SBF informed the group that there are plans in place for the Cardiff Airport Panels to be revamped in time for the summer season and asked the network for any views on what should be used to promote the region. It was agreed that Gower was a natural resource (for sports/activities) and this should be featured.

It was also recommended that the group consider Bristol Airport as a possible place to promote the region and Wales in general. It was agreed that that was a job for Visit Wales, but perhaps the SBF Network could encourage Visit Wales to pursue this.

A Lobbying Group

Dawn asked if the SBF Network could act as a lobbying group... picking up things such as Bristol Airport and an issue which emerged as part of the discussion on how we promote Swansea Bay, namely the probability of Kite Surfing being banned from Rhossili/Llangennith beach from 2011.

Events

The group put forward the suggestion that Swansea Bay should have a unique event to attract visitors. Like, for example, the Hay Festival. The Dylan Thomas Prize and the Dylan Thomas Festival were mentioned as existing events with the potential to grow, especially with the Dylan Thomas Centenary happening in 2014. Events around this theme such as a Dylan Thomas pub crawl were suggested to add variety.

It was mentioned the marina should be capitalised on. With the new wake boarding centre, perhaps a South Wales 'Wakestock' festival could be held here.

It was also suggested that large events happening around Swansea Bay should collaborate more, working together to promote and advertise large events. Perhaps with one central website to collate event information.

Golf and the Ryder Cup

With the Ryder Cup approaching, many visitors to Wales will be looking for clubs where they can play golf. Could we produce a golf booklet for Swansea Bay? Or have a golfing page on the web? It was also suggested that we could aim to get a link from the Ryder Cup website.

Students

An idea was put forward to use students to assist in the promotion of Swansea Bay. Young, creative minds who are looking for experience could be invited to attend a student network event. The Young Chamber of Commerce is already set up and could be approached to encourage suggestions of how best to engage with students.

Ambassadors Scheme

Cardiff and Co, a similar organisation to Swansea Bay Futures, runs an ambassadors scheme, whereby ambassadors get involved and sell the city. This could be replicated here by businesses 'shouting about' Swansea Bay:

- tweet news
- promote Swansea bay on Facebook
- mention Swansea Bay on email signatures
- speak about Swansea Bay on your own website
- speak about Swansea Bay when giving presentations outside of the region

Local sport stars and celebrities could be invited to become Swansea Bay Ambassadors.

- Ospreys and Swansea players can talk about the region at away games
- Could we advertise Swansea Bay in 'away' game programmes such as Munster, Leinster, Edinburgh etc.
- Could Swansea bay have a presence on Ospreys and Swans websites
- Can we encourage high profile people to 'tweet' about Swansea Bay

Other ideas

Invite 'Dirty Sanchez' to film stunts at Swansea Bay landmarks and beauty spots as their YouTube clips receive lots of views

Reformat the newsletter so that the headlines are on the front sheet and people can then go straight to articles which are of interest.

Forum

It was suggested that Facebook or LinkedIn could be used as a forum to continue the discussion between meetings of the Network.

What can you do?

Dawn passed around a document that suggests ways in which SBF Network members can support the work of Swansea Bay Futures at no cost, using resources freely available on the web or by circulating the newsletter, getting business contacts to support SBF, etc.

Next meeting: Wednesday 21st July, at 4.30pm. Venue tbc