

Tourism Questionnaire

The Economic and Community Regeneration Scrutiny Committee are undertaking an inquiry into Tourism and appreciate your views.

Please complete the below questionnaire and feel free to attach any further information to your response.

The Committee may wish to contact you for further information based on the responses you have provided; if you are happy to be contacted please can you provide your information and tick the box below.

Name:

Date:

Organisation:

I am happy for the Committee to contact me if they have any further queries (please tick)

Contact email:

Contact Telephone Number:

What is your opinion of Tourism in Neath Port Talbot?

The majority of the respondents stated that Tourism within Neath Port Talbot is very poor and has been neglected, especially since the Tourism Team has been disbanded. Some of the respondents stated that there is not enough in the area for tourists; one respondent specified that there could be more facilities available further West. A few of the respondents said that Tourism within Neath Port Talbot does not exist and that it has poor family friendly facilities; it was also mentioned that there have not been enough innovations or developments and that some areas are not well looked after and have caused visitors to lose interest in them.

A lot of the respondents recognise the potential for Tourism in Neath Port Talbot and stated that there are plenty of opportunities available; however, the potential is not being realised to its fullest and most of the opportunities are overlooked. Some of the positive comments from respondents included that Neath Port Talbot has lovely scenery, it is in a superb position and the leaflets on particular places of interests are good. One of the respondents stated that private enterprise is beginning to attract visitors to the area; for example, facilities for cyclists in the Afan Valley. The majority of the respondents stated that Neath Port Talbot needs good marketing and promotion of the facilities that it has to offer; at the moment Neath Port Talbot is poorly advertised. One of the respondents, who does not live in the Borough, stated that they do not hear or see much about the area.

Some of the suggestions included new signposting and directions, supporting events run by local groups and/or individuals and volunteer groups from local communities could help maintain areas.

It was also mentioned that Neath Port Talbot needs support, co-ordination, resources and funding; as it was said that the area is not resourced sufficiently to develop Tourism, it is under represented and critically underfunded. One respondent stated that the name Port Talbot is synonymous with industry and pollution.

What does Neath Port Talbot have to 'offer' in terms of tourism?

The majority of respondents listed a number of attractions and facilities that think Neath Port Talbot has to offer. A lot of respondents mentioned the Country Parks, such as Margam and Gnoll; another popular response was the beaches, in particular Aberavon Seafront. One respondent said that many of the attractions are natural and free. Some activities mentioned included golfing, leisure facilities, field sports, fishing, horse riding, and 'world class' mountain biking facilities; in regards to the mountain biking, one of the respondents commented that Neath Port Talbot has one of the best mountain biking areas in the UK. Many respondents also mentioned Afan Forest Park, the Steelworks, the mountains, the many cycle paths, the canal network and the lakes and waterfalls. It was also stated that there are different options in regards to restaurants and accommodation; one respondent said that cafes could be improved and open for longer.

A few of the respondents mentioned that Neath Port Talbot has a lot to offer with regards to history and that historically, Neath Port Talbot is a very important area. An example given was the Castles. One respondent said that Neath Port Talbot has a vast history and it is not drawn upon; it was stated that the County needs to exploit its creative heritage. One respondent mentioned that Neath Port Talbot has 'outstanding' industrial heritage sites.

Many respondents also commented on the attractive countryside, attractive towns and beautiful scenery. It was mentioned that Neath Port Talbot has good access to places such as the Gower and Brecon Beacons.

There were also some respondents that stated that Neath Port Talbot does not have a lot to offer regarding tourism and one respondent didn't know what the County has to offer.

One of the respondents suggested more could be made of walking in the forestry and over the commons. Another suggested that the focus should be on what is available, prioritising nature and adventure Tourism. Another suggestion included more infrastructure to support the outdoor leisure industry.

Overall, the respondents gave a variety of different activities and facilities that Neath Port Talbot has to offer in terms of Tourism; with one respondent stating that there is something to interest any visitors, young to old. Another respondent stated that there are a diverse range of activities and places of interest to visit. It was stated that Neath Port Talbot has enormous potential and plenty of scope to offer more.

What is it lacking?

The main points, that respondents said Neath Port Talbot is lacking include, co-ordination, promotion, funding and a lack of vision. It was also stated that there is no central point to discover Neath Port Talbot for those visiting the area. A few respondents also said that Neath Port Talbot is lacking support from organisations such as Visit Wales and the Council. Other points included a lack of information, a lack of destination marketing and not enough encouragement for catering establishments. One of the respondents stated that Neath Port Talbot has no National or International footprint.

One respondent stated that Neath Port Talbot isn't lacking anything other than organisations that will allow it to reach its full potential. Strategic thinking and on the ground thinking was also mentioned, as well as having a meaningful joined up approach. It was also mentioned that every decision made takes too long; urgency is needed, for example signage and car park resurfacing have become low priority.

The suggestions included more development of the beach front, more progress made on the Plaza plans, a nicer shopping area, more quality gastro pubs, better transport links, a camp site, more local and organic Fairtrade goods and a water sports centre. One respondent said that a lot more enthusiasm is needed from the Local Authority and that there are aspects of Neath Port Talbot that are neglected. Another suggestion included facilities in the right areas, for example, tourist friendly facilities near Neath Abbey; also, there is a need for museums and art galleries. It was also stated that an information centre where tourist can find out what is on in the area would be useful.

What is the perception of Neath Port Talbot by a visitor?

With regards to the perception of a visitor, a few respondents stated that the visitors themselves would have to be asked. However, one respondent did mention that when previous surveys have been carried out, a lot of the responses were positive.

Some respondents stated that a lot of the visitors perceptions are that there is not much around and is a place in which tourists pass through to get to or from other areas; Neath Port Talbot does not give visitors that are passing, much of an interest in the area. There were a lot of comments made that Neath Port Talbot is more of an industrial site and that the Steelworks is what brings the visitors. One respondent suggested that Neath Port Talbot need to clean up the community so that people are not afraid to visit; on similar lines, another respondent stated that visitors are probably disappointed with run down areas, such as the town centres.

On the other hand, a lot of respondents believe that visitors have a positive perception of Neath Port Talbot and that when visitors have stayed; the area has surpassed their expectations. One respondent stated that visitors are usually overwhelmed by the natural beauty of the area. Another respondent said that visitors are surprised at the diversity of the area.

What are the economic benefits of Tourism to Neath Port Talbot and how can these be improved?

A lot of the respondents stated that there are massive economic benefits of Tourism to Neath Port Talbot. One of the respondents said that Neath Port Talbot is 'The' cost effective gateway to the West of Wales, Mid Wales and even Cardiff. Respondents stated that more job opportunities will arise if Tourism is further developed. Another respondent commented that there needs to be a network of business and authority departments working together in order to attract visitors and then keep them within the area to benefit from the spending.

Some of the ideas on how they can be improved included planning, advertising, investment, supply chain opportunities and a central hub to help co-ordinate. It was also mentioned that there should be money spent in local businesses; to follow with this, another respondent stated that the economic benefits can be improved by visitors spending in local shops, pubs and restaurants. One respondent said that the tourists bring a lot of money into the town; another respondent stated that if the town has more to offer such as jobs and businesses, then the local economy would grow.

Overall, the majority of respondents commented on the benefits of improving Tourism in Neath Port Talbot include more people spending money, higher employment and a much more sustainable sector.

What are you doing to increase visitor numbers?

Some of the respondents have a business background, and some of them do not; so the actions they are taking in regards to increasing visitor numbers vary.

One of the respondents stated that they put on shows most Friday and Saturday nights and provide free entertainment on a weekend. Some respondents mentioned that they are improving on what they have, for example one organisation is converting disused barns into quality self-catering cottages. Another respondent stated that they have attended a number of travel tradeshows, promoting the destination. By looking at the responses to the survey, it seems as though organisations are trying to do their bit to help increase visitor numbers.

A lot of the respondents mentioned that undertaking sales and marketing and promotion helps them to increase visitor numbers. Investment in facilities was another point that one of the respondents made. Social media was also mentioned; using sites such as Twitter and a business's own website to advertise and promote.

One respondent stated that it is not their responsibility to increase visitor numbers, but their responsibility is to keep them in Neath Port Talbot. Some of the respondents that have not got businesses said that they promote Neath Port Talbot to friends and family from different places. One respondent stated that they volunteer at a number of places in order to improve the cleanliness and aesthetic appearance of Neath Port Talbot.

Is Neath Port Talbot 'accessible' as a place to visit?

The majority of the respondents said that Neath Port Talbot is an accessible place to visit; a few mentioning that the transport links are good. However, a few said that it is not accessible. Other respondents stated that it could be made more accessible; for example better sign-posting. It was also mentioned that not all areas are accessible, for example Afan Valley; and the area is not that accessible for those using public transport.

How do you work with partners/local providers?

Those that responded to the question gave their personal experience of working with partners and local providers. For example, Blancos Hotel stated that they liaise with other hotels in the area. A few respondents said that they work with Tourism Swansea Bay and some respondents said that they work with Natural Resources Wales.

One respondent said that it is difficult to work with partners/local providers as there is no local co-ordination or agreed strategy. Another respondent mentioned the disbanded tourism team; due to the loss of the tourism team, they are having difficulty finding some sort of forum where business owners can work together to promote the area and their businesses.

What are you doing on a national and international basis to attract visitors?

Some respondents said that they are not doing anything on a national and/or international basis to attract visitors. A lot of the respondents said that they are using social media and the internet in order to do this; a few mentioned that they use Trip Advisor. One respondent said that they attend trade shows to do this also. Visit Wales was mentioned in the responses; one respondent mentioned that it is the job of Visit Wales to do this, whereas another respondent said that they work with Visit Wales to attract visitors nationally and internationally.

What are the challenges for the future?

Respondents listed what they thought the challenges for the future were. Some examples included prospect of steel works closing, co-ordination and development, finance, dealing with Brexit, to keep the present high standards up whilst expanding businesses and promoting the preservation and regeneration of the canal network. Some of the other challenges mentioned were maintaining economic growth and attracting more visitors and attracting the younger generation.

It was also mentioned that the area has become stagnant and that it will be a challenge to give Neath Port Talbot a Tourism identity. One respondent also mentioned that it will be difficult to try and keep up with a modernised ever-changing world. The maintenance was also mentioned by a few respondents; one of them said that some of the current tourist attractions will disappear to lack of maintenance.

Have you made use of the Council's services such as Business Advice?

The majority of respondents said that they have not made the use of the services. However, there were quite a few respondents that said that they had. The disbanded tourism team was also mentioned; a few respondents said they worked closely with the team.

Do you have links with regional or national tourism bodies? Please state which ones.

The majority of respondents said that they do not have links with regional or national Tourism Bodies. A lot of the respondents that said that they have links and mentioned Tourism Swansea Bay and Visit Wales; these two organisations were the most popular responses.

Trade associations, Trip Advisor, the Camping and Caravanning Club and National Trust were among some of the other bodies mentioned.

What do you think the following bodies can do to further support tourism in our area?

a) Regional tourism organisations/Visit Wales.

Some of the responses stated that they could source real grant funding and investment, help promote and advertise, create structure and focus and be more proactive. One respondent also mentioned that these organisations should improve their information on Neath Port Talbot, regarding what it offers for tourists.

b) Chambers of trade.

Some of the responses stated that they could become a co-ordinating body of local businesses, assist in funding support for the structure, promote attractions and events and pass on information to businesses across the Borough. However, some of the respondents stated that there is nothing that Chambers of Trade can do; with one respondent saying that they have found them very limited for their particular needs.

c) Neath Port Talbot CBC.

Some of the responses stated that they could produce and promote a Tourism Strategy, take Tourism seriously, identify business needs and opportunities, create a long term action plan, reinstate the Tourism department, improvement on website and secure and protect funding.

Do you have any other comments on Tourism in Neath Port Talbot in general?

Some of the comments that respondents made included the following:

'Save it or lose it'

'I believe that our economy needs a dedicated Tourism team'

'Great destination, now is the time to promote it'

'Marketing the whole of the County is a necessity'

'Needs someone with dynamism to get it off the ground'

'We have a lot to offer but we need people with vision to pull it all together'

'We have the points of interest and all it needs is to be shown to the world, before it gets forgotten'

'We should look at tourist passports that encourage people to visit a number of places across the County'

'It's generally under-valued'

'Appreciate the importance of Tourism and invest in potential'