

Report to the Tourism and Leisure Committee – July 2019

Destination Website and Marketing Campaigns – Visit Weston-super-Mare

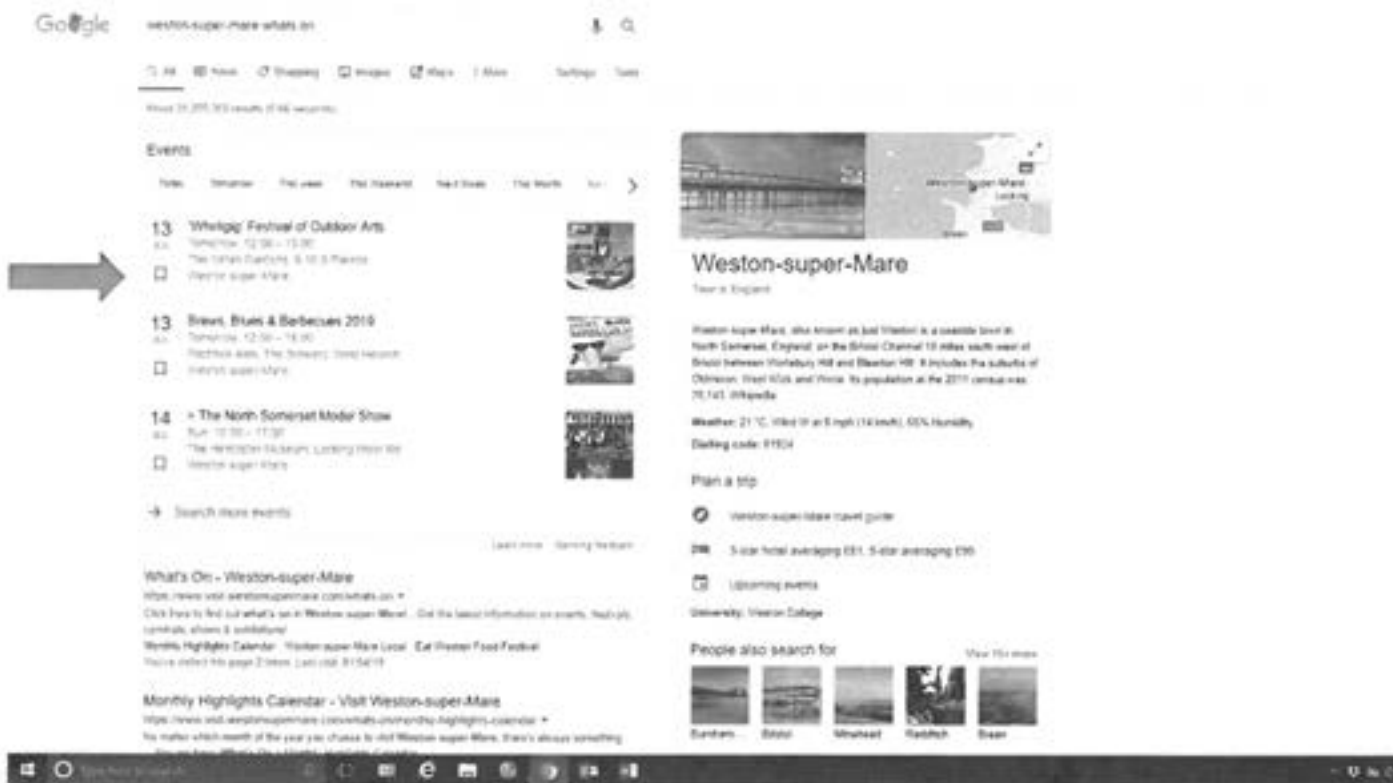
Report written by Emma Williams, Tourism Marketing Officer

4.1 Website Statistics

The Visit Weston-super-Mare website received just over 68,000 visitors in May and June of this year.

Visit Weston website support 'Simpleview' (formally known as 'New Mind | Tell Us'), have reported a turbulent period for all Destination Marketing Organisations' website traffic during this period, owing to a number of recent updates that have been implemented by Google, namely what is known as the 'Google Walled Garden'. This is where upon undertaking a search on Google, the site returns the results as normal but with its own information as a priority. These results often mean that users no longer need to navigate to a specific website and thus traffic is reduced to the sites themselves.

The example shown below illustrates a search for 'Weston-super-Mare What's On'. Google has mined information from various other websites and offers the results as their own, above our page – which owing to our diligent SEO work is still the top authentic search result.



All DMOs overseen by Simpleview, as well as our nearest DMO 'Visit Somerset', have seen a reduction in traffic, owing to this latest update by Google. They have reassured us that they are working on updates for our sites that will work to counteract this. Visit Somerset recently reported this significant dip in their website numbers following the launch of their new, in-house ran website in June.

Another factor in the industry-wide downturn in year-on-year web traffic, is the poor weather the UK saw in June 2019. Fewer people have shown an interest in visiting UK resorts than in June 2018, when the weather was considerably better. This has ultimately led to a reduction in website hits from potential visitors researching destinations. In Weston specifically, we received 130mm of rainfall in June alone, just under half of that received for 2019 as a whole so far, with a period of seven days when rain fell every day.

Traffic to the Visit Weston website for the period of May and June 2019 is shown below, with 2018 data, shown in parenthesis.

Period	Visitors	Unique Visitors	New Visitors	Top 10 Visitor IP address locations
1 st May – 30 th June	68,386	64,622	84%	London Bristol (not set) Chicago Weston-super-Mare Birmingham Bridgwater Southampton Cardiff Taunton
	(92,071)	(88,344)	(82.5%)	

The Committee will note from the table above, that the top ten locations are the same as in the previous reporting period, again influencing our destination marketing decisions. Chicago remains the only non UK-based location, upon further research, an explanation for this might be our discovery of a town near to Chicago also called Weston.

Weston-super-Mare continues to feature in the top ten, demonstrating that the Visit Weston website is utilised not only by visitors, but by residents too; providing in-resort promotion for services and events held in the town, thus aiding a boost to the local economy.

Top Ten Visited Website Pages

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Home Page | 6. Beach |
| 2. Air Weekend & Armed Forces Day 2019 | 7. Parking |
| 3. What's On | 8. Shopping |
| 4. Things to Do | 9. Accommodation |
| 5. Monthly Highlights Calendar | 10. Attractions |

Simpleview have provided information on their recent merger and subsequent name change, with a comprehensive explanation of the benefits to us. These include: an expanded workforce of SEO and Analytics experts on hand to assist clients, heightened status with Google as a 'Premier Google Partner' and increased design resources - more expert staff experienced in cutting-edge website design, acknowledged amongst the market leaders. We look forward to reaping the benefits of these uprated services in the future, as our current contract with Simpleview runs until 2021.

4.2 Social Media

During the reporting period across the three social media platforms currently with Visit Weston accounts (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), we earned 179,012 impressions (individual occasions where our content was viewed) – 117,300 of these on Facebook, which continues to be our most effective social media platform and consequently provided 1500 'click-throughs' to the Visit Weston website.

Across the three aforementioned platforms, we gained 466 new followers during May and June 2019.

4.3 Current and Forthcoming Advertising and Destination Marketing Campaigns

Our summer campaign with 'Clear Channel', an outdoor advertising agency, has launched this month. Thirteen digital and printed poster screen advertisements are being displayed in July and August across key locations that provide the greatest impact on potential visitors to Weston-super-Mare. Again, these were selected as a result of the geographical data gathered that shows the locations of people online interested in Weston

These thirteen sites include high footfall retail areas including Sainsbury's stores and malls including Cribbs Causeway Bristol, Gloucester Quays, Taunton, Bridgwater, Cheltenham, Newport and Cardiff as well as the M6 Digital Tower (North and Southbound) at Walsall. These will be particularly impactful on stationary traffic at a notorious motorway congestion hot-spot and on pedestrian shoppers in high footfall retail areas.

If members would like a complete list of where and when adverts are being placed, this can be provided by request.

At the time of writing this report (12th July) there are three advertisements in place on the northbound Digital Tower on M6 at Walsall, outside Sainsburys in Newport and outside Vodafone and Boots in Cribbs Causeway, Bristol.



The Global Media online campaign (as reported in the last meeting) concluded on 10th June. This comprised of an interactive website advert for Visit Weston, displayed across a network of large websites including The Daily Mail, Gumtree and Amazon. The advert could be clicked on, taking users to our website. As a result of the campaign we received just under 230,000 impressions for the advert.

In May 2019, the Tourism Marketing Officer was approached by Coach Touring UK magazine to enquire interest in placing an advertisement in their summer edition, which focuses on their feature: 'The Cream of The South West'. Considering the ongoing customer base to Weston from coach companies, we elected to take up the offer of placing a full page advertisement with a website listing on their page – Weston Museum are also included in their database of attractions, so a link between the council and this organisation was already established. In order to promote both the town as resort as well as a popular event, the advert focuses on Carnival.

In consultation with Carnival organisers we created an eye-

catching and visually-led design as shown, with succinct copy describing the event and the potential for group bookings, suitable for coach companies. At the time of writing this report, we are waiting for a printed copy of the publication to arrive through the post for our records.

The final destination marketing campaign currently underway is in conjunction with Bristol City Football Club.

As reported in the last meeting, Leeds and West Yorkshire have been identified as an emerging marketing of visitors to Weston-super-Mare and consideration had been given to taking out advertising in a match day programme for fixtures between Bristol City and Leeds United – as this would reach two customer bases simultaneously. The most advantageous fixture for this advertisement placement is the home match between these teams at Ashton Gate, which happens to take place as the first match of the season for both teams on 4th August.



At the time of writing this report, consideration is being given to becoming the official match sponsor for this game, as offered as an alternative by the marketing team at Ashton Gate. The game is to be televised on Sky TV with a predicted audience of around 500,000. The additional benefits given to match sponsors, including extra advertising on the ground's scoreboard and post-match interview sponsors' board, could prove very lucrative; reaching a national audience as well as the two demographics already being targeted.

4. Visit Weston-super-Mare Caroline Darlington and Emma Williams

4.1 Partnerships

Visit Weston has a current total of 86 partners, whose annual fees are vital to our sustainability so we place great importance on working closely with them and in maintaining a constant exchange of business ideas. There is an ongoing programme of sales to increase our partnerships to businesses within Weston-super-Mare and within an hour's drive.

Bronze £150	Silver £250	Gold £350	Platinum £500	Platinum Plus £700
30	14	12	19	11

As many of the current partners were signed up prior to April 2019, we cannot give accurate figures of income generation due to rates straddling financial years and apportionment applied. An estimate would be in the region of £25,000 based on the above.

In the last 6 months the following new partners were signed up:

- The Blitz Tearoom, WsM
- Clevedon Golf Centre
- Clevedon Pier
- Clip n Climb, WsM
- Ellenborough Hall Holiday Apartments, WsM
- The Little House by the Park, WsM
- Mendips Raceway, Shipham
- Proud Bar, WsM
- Rich's Cider, Highbridge
- Somerset Speedway, Highbridge
- Timbertops Guest House, WsM
- Weston-super-Mare Golf Club

The Curious Pumpkin vegan café signed contracts, but closed down within 2 months of signing. The Bijou vegan guest house also signed, but closed down within 3 months of opening.

The Highlea Guest House opened under new ownership in May 2018 and re-signed at Platinum in 2019 stating "it was the best thing he did when launching a new business, he saw his money back within 2 months, more than happy with the service".

We conduct ongoing dialogue with partners, for example, accommodation providers are contacted regularly for availability updates and wherever necessary, social media posts and posters in the VIC are created to encourage bookings.

Renewals of existing partnerships are ongoing, with several needing renewal at present. These will be renewed using the new, rolling contracts which will save manpower for next renewal dates.

4.2 UK TIC Forum

The Southern UKTIC Forum was held in Weston-super-Mare on 7th June and was attended by managers of the following tourist boards: Destination Bristol, Taunton, Minehead, Bradford on Avon, Bovey Tracey, Woolacombe, Worcester, Tiverton, Burnham on Sea

It was unanimously agreed that the Southern UKTIC should become a "voice" to lobby for mandatory budgets for TICs and for our services to be valued as a necessity. This will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting, to be held in early October in Bradford on Avon.

5. Visitor Information Centre (VIC) – Caroline Darlington

5.1 Shop and Ticket Sales

Installation of Ticketsource system under the Blakehay Theatre licence, has been installed at the VIC. The Blakehay Theatre and the Museum have arranged the installation of a display board at the VIC that promotes their events and advertises that tickets can be purchased at the VIC. There was a significant cost to the VIC for this, just under £500. Due to it being a Blakehay licence, we cannot use the system to sell tickets for other venues. We have commenced selling paper tickets for the Fairford Air Tattoo in July, the Cologne Philharmonia Vivaldi & Mozart concert in August and for Stars of Time Comic Con in August. Although the average sale remains at under £5, we have already seen that customers many customers do not carry cash and are more than happy to purchase tickets on their debit cards.

5.2 PRIDE Award

The VIC was awarded "winner" in the category "Workplace Award", which recognises an employer or workplace that has created an environment that has changed or continues to change the lives of LGBT+ people. This was Weston-super-Mare's first Equality Champion awards, held on the Grand Pier in June.

Grounds Update Report

Coniston Green

Expressions of Interest were returned on the 12th July and tender packs sent out to successful applicant's week commencing the 22nd July. The current timescale for the project is as follows:

- A. **Week Commencing 22nd July 2019** - Design and Build brief sent to all companies who have met the Expression of Interest requirements (6 weeks allowed for the Tender process) to provide a proposed costed scheme for the project. This will include a requirement to confirm that timescales are able to be met by the chosen contractor.
- B. **Week Commencing 26th August 2019** - Formal opening of tender submissions and assessments of written submission. Formal invitations will be sent out for interviews.
- C. **Week Commencing 09th September 2019** – Interviews to be conducted by a nominated panel of Councillors and Officers.
- D. **30th September 2019 Tourism and Leisure Committee** – Formal approval of Design and Build contractor by committee, based on assessment of submissions and interview.
- E. **01st / 02nd October 2019** – Contract awarded to approved contractor.
- F. **Works to begin on site – Early October 2019**

Members will be aware from the previous meeting under minute number 29 the EMRRP has commenced for managing our 21 Play Areas.

General Play Area Management

Routine play area inspections are continuing along with a focus on undertaking operational repairs and maintenance tasks.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted