

Report from Caroline Darlington - Tourism Manager, Matt Hardy - Operational Services Manager to the Tourism & Leisure Committee December 2022

5. Tourism Updates

During the period when See Monster was in situ we instigated a campaign to host familiarization trips for social media journalists, known as bloggers. The aim was to increase publicity for all that Weston-super-Mare has to offer in as cost-efficient manner as possible, using the See Monster as the hook. We have mentioned our desire to run such campaigns in previous reports to committee and as the installation was only ever going to be in WsM for 8 weeks, we capitalized on this and ran a series of fam trips as an experiment.

It was the perfect opportunity to showcase Visit Weston Partners and was so successful that we are recommending that we continue such campaigns for the future.

We were able to negotiate with some of the Visit Weston partners for concessionary prices for meals, accommodation and entrance tickets and put together complete itineraries for the journalists. The following is an example of an itinerary for family bloggers who brought their children: -

1. Meet and greet at hotel
2. Accompany to See Monster and onto the structure
3. Walking tour to include street art and architecture
4. Tour of Museum with lunch in Clara's Café
5. Free climbs at Clip n Climb
6. Free Wristbands on the Grand Pier
7. Dinner at Revo Kitchen to get the evening view
8. Evening climb of See Monster
9. Overnight hotel with breakfast next morning

The campaign resulted in articles on websites and on social media platforms, in particular on Instagram. A total of 8 "creators/journalists/bloggers" were hosted, with the parties made up of 13 adults and 10 children. Monetary costs from our destination marketing budget were just over £1,000.

Some of the resultant articles have been posted on the VW website and we have received excellent engagement on our Instagram shares.

Although it is logistically very hard work to piece together itineraries that are suitable for the interests of the journalists, we strongly advocate including fam trips in future budgets. It is a perfect vehicle for added value to our Visit Weston Partners.

For interest, The Mercury newspaper has been purchased by the Newsquest Group. We have been in contact with the new editor who has confirmed that they will continue to publish Explore magazine. A meeting will be held in January to discuss how we can capitalize on this.

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5.1 Partner Update

ACCOMMODATION		
Albany Lodge	Silver	Closed business, may open 3 rooms by Easter but will sell on Airbnb
Basecamp at Mendip Activity Centre	Platinum	New sign up
The Beaches Guest House	silver	Maybe
The Beach (YMCA)	Platinum Plus	New sign up
Beachside Holiday Park	Gold	yes
Bella Vista Guest House	Silver	Unsure, have been unable to contact
Bridge Hall Apartments	Gold	yes
Bucklegrove Holiday Park	Bronze	Yes since last report
The Commodore Hotel NOW SOUTH SANDS	Bronze	Maybe, still in hand and constantly chasing
Country View Holiday Park	Platinum	Has re-joined at Platinum
Court Farm Country Park	Bronze	Yes
Dulhorn Farm Holiday Park	Gold	Yes
Ellenborough Hall Holiday Apartments	Gold	No
Florence Guest House	Bronze	Maybe, deciding whether to re-open and up for sale
Go South, The Beach House	Silver	yes
Go South, Kyrenia Apartments	Silver	yes
Go South, Salisbury Court Apartments	Silver	Since last report the property has been sold to new owners
Grove Lodge	Silver	yes
Highlea House	Platinum	Yes at Gold

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ACCOMMODATION		
Kenilworth Guest House	Gold	no, sold up
Lakeside Holiday Park	gold	Taken over 01/02 by Royale Resorts. Currently "no"
Lauriston Hotel	Platinum	Have invoiced the college
Lewinsdale Lodge	Platinum	New owners. They are still considering.
Martyndale Suites now ROYAL CRESCENT APTS	Bronze	yes
Mendip View Luxury Lodges	Bronze	Yes
Milton Lodge	Bronze	yes
Oakover Guest House	gold	
Riverside Holiday Park	Platinum	Yes
Roedean Guest House	bronze	Closed
Royal Grosvenor Hotel	gold	yes
Sand Bay Retreat	Bronze	Yes
Sand Farm Caravan & Camping Site	Silver	Yes
Sand Bay Fish & Chip Shop and The Cosy Hatch	Special £99	New sign up since last report
Shepherds Hut, Hutton (Classic Cottages)	Gold	New sign up since last report
Stonebridge Farm Caravan Park	Silver	Yes
Strawberryfield Holiday Park	Silver	In negotiation via Dave Peters
Sunset Bay Hotel	Bronze	Yes
Timbertop	Gold	Yes new signing
Wall Eden Farm	Plat Plus	Yes
Webbington Farm Holiday Cottages	Platinum	Yes

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ATTRACTIONS		
The Bishop's Palace	Bronze	Yes
The Blakehay Theatre	Plat Plus	Yes
Bleadon Hill Golf Course	Plat Plus	Maybe
Brean Theme Park	Platinum	In negotiation with all Brean parks. Awaiting decision from their marketing dept.
Clevedon Golf Centre	Bronze	Yes
Clevedon Pier & Heritage Trust	Gold	Dave Peters to visit
Clip n Climb	Platinum	Yes
Court Farm Country Park	Bronze	Yes
The Grand Pier	Gold	Yes
Jump n Jackz	bronze	No
Mendip Activity Centre	Platinum	New signing
Mendips Raceway	bronze	No
Noah's Ark Zoo Farm	Plat Plus	Yes
Ocean Adventurers	Platinum	Yes
Puxton Park	Plat Plus	Yes
Rich's Cider	Bronze	In discussion via Dave Peters
Water Adventure Play Park	Platinum	
West Somerset Railway	bronze	
Weston Museum	Plat Plus	
Weston-super-Mare Golf Club	Bronze	Yes, signed since last report
Weston-super-Mare AFC	silver	Yes

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ATTRACTIONS		
The Winter Gardens Pavilion	Plat Plus	
Wookey Hole Caves	Plat Plus	Yes have resigned

RESTAURANTS		
Bistrot Pierre	Platinum	Yes at Platinum Plus
The Blitz Tearoom	Bronze	No, not even at £99
Cosy Hatch & Fish n Chips Kewstoke	Bronze	New signing since last report
Hadleys at Number One	Bronze	Has re-opened, in discussion with them for Bronze
Kaspa's Desserts	bronze	Awaiting decision from head office
Nando's	Bronze	Awaiting decision from head office
Proud Bar	Bronze	Never paid
Revo Kitchen & Golf	Bronze	Yes
Tiffin at The Beach	Gold	Has re-signed since last report
Tiffin at The Pier	Gold	Closed down, in discussion with their new outlet, Scuzzi
Tiffin Group Scuzzis restaurant	Bronze	New signing since last report
Winston's Fish Bar	Bronze	Yes

SHOPPING		
(BID) Dolphin Square	Platinum	No they have given almost all their budget to WPA and have no funds for Visit Weston
Grove Village (BID)	Platinum	Ditto
High Street (BID)	Platinum	Ditto

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SHOPPING		
Orchard Meadows (BID)	Platinum	ditto
Town Centre Gateway (BID)	Platinum	ditto
Sovereign Shopping Centre	Platinum	Awaiting new GM, they are on notice that invoice due
First Bus	bronze	Have invoiced them

We regret to report that we have had little success with the £99 introductory deal, those outlets who are struggling already are not happy to pay even that small amount. Even existing partners such as The Blitz Tearoom have said no. In fact we have achieved only one sign-up, the fish & chip shop in Sand Bay, at £99.

We propose giving a free directory listing to as many local businesses as possible. We can do this with the help of Dave Peters and we calculate it would take no more than one working week to load onto the site.

There would be no image, just a glyph to show if they are a shop, a restaurant etc then a one or two sentence description that is enough to explain their business but not to describe it in full. No link to their website either. We have loaded Sprout in Grove Park as an example:



Sprout

Grove Park, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 2QJ

About Us

Cafe in Grove Park, specialising in plant based cuisine.

Map Location and What's Nearby

This would give us chance to up-sell them to a proper package as and when they get back on their feet as we would be able to track the number of hits.

With the See Monster opening, would also give a free directory of business in the town who may benefit from the predicted increase in visitors during what are normally slow months.

Members' direction is required.

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5.2 Statistics

When advertising See Monster on the Visit Weston website we predicted that many people would mis-spell, so we included Sea Monster also. We also ensured that See Monster was mentioned in as many relevant pages as possible to capture Search Engine Optimisation. During the calendar month of October the following search numbers were recorded:

Sea Monster Weston	22,703
See Monster Weston	19,116
See Monster	9,935
Sea Monster Weston super Mare	9,734
See Monster Weston super Mare	6,027
See Monster tickets	5,559
Weston Sea Monster	5,486
Weston super Mare Sea Monster	5,199
Seemonster	2,832
The Sea Monster weston super Mare	2,634
Sea Monster weston super mare tickets	2,610
Sea Monster weston super mare cost	2,526
Sea Monster	1,358

We thought this would be a good example to explain how SEO works, with a total of 97,519 searches captured.

5.3 Satellite VIC

Towards the end of the summer season a significant increase in the number of tourists making inquiries in person at the satellite VIC was noted. This was because visitors had been signposted to the facility by the roving teams of Welcome Hosts and because it was flagged and made more visible from a distance. In order to offer a professional service, we had to adjust the rota to ensure 2 staff were available to take waterpark admission fees along with two others to assist with visitor inquiries.

From our experiences over the last two summers, we have identified that it is impossible to deliver two services simultaneously with 2 staff and a structure which cannot accommodate more than 3 persons at any one time.

We therefore recommend that a second, smaller wooden structure should be placed at the Waterpark that is specifically and only for Waterpark admissions, moving the current structure towards the perimeter of the park and placing the new structure close to the main entrance gates.

The unofficial second satellite VIC that we installed at the entrance to the See Monster viewing platform at the south end of the Bay Café was a real coup and proved to be extremely successful. Its success was both from welcoming visitors and from signposting them to businesses in the town after their visit to the See Monster supporting the visitor economy.

Our efforts did not go unnoticed by New Substance staff or by Unboxed2022 staff. Please see below email correspondence received from Unboxed.

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Caroline, it has been a genuine pleasure to work with you on this. I will look you up the next time I'm in North Somerset...

Enjoy your winter "break", and pass on my thanks to the whole team, too!

Take care,

Sarah

Sarah Hunt (she/her) Tel: 07847 778112
STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS MANAGER



unboxed2022.uk



1 Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2JB

5.4 Silica Update – to receive the verbal report from the Assistant Town Clerk

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6.1 Team Update

The Team Leader contracts have now come to an end for the current season and casual shifts in information services have come to a close. However, several of the team have remained on the books and are now picking up casual shifts across multiple Town Council services. Whilst we are recruiting for a new Tourism Marketing Officer we are also able to utilise existing resources to backfill the role and ensure resilience when it comes to maintaining the website and social media channels.

6.2 Mobile VIC

As a result of the Tuk Tuks no longer being on the road, we have noticed a reduced ability to provide a truly mobile information service. Although we have been able to maintain a presence at certain sites during peak times (such as the train station) we have lost out on opportunities to promote information services in surrounding areas such as Worle. We were also unable to support outreach events such as the Castle Batch consultation and the community event at Becket Primary School. We were also planning to have a presence at this year's Carnival but had to withdraw from the event as we could not use the vehicles. Another challenge we faced was the reduced visibility at mobile sites as we were not able to utilise the large flag we had purchased as it was designed to be secured under the wheel of the vehicle.

We strongly believe that having a mobile information services utilising unique vehicles of some description is a valuable asset to the town.

Weston Museum has noted that they have seen an increase in visitor numbers as a result of the Welcome Hosts being situated at the SEE MONSTER site.

6.3 WEBSITE UPDATE

The website continues to be updated on a regular basis to ensure that we are maximising our visibility and providing relevant content to our users. Utilising SEO and creating engaging content, Visit Weston have appeared in 59,816 organic searches (1st October – 22 November 2022). In the interest clarity, an organic search is when a user searches for a term online and we appear in the top search results. I would also request that members note that this level of engagement would not have been possible if we were not able to utilise existing resources whilst we are recruiting for a new Tourism Marketing Officer.

Members are requested to note the report.