

TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

The Tourism and Leisure Committee deals with all aspects of tourism to the town together with the Town Council's parks, play areas (including the Water Park) and outdoor sports and leisure facilities.

Membership: 13 Quorum: 6

1. To deal with the management, development and operation of sport and leisure facilities.
2. To manage all Town Council parks and open spaces.
3. To manage the Water Adventure Play Park, skateboard parks and all play areas.
4. To manage the Council's tourism and destination marketing initiatives.
5. To manage and monitor production and maintenance of the tourism website and brochure.
6. To manage advertising and revenue to secure maximum income.

7 & 8. Report to the Tourism & Leisure Committee – 3rd June 2019

Partnership Working and Visitor Information Centre (VIC)

Report written by Caroline Darlington, Tourism Manager

Introduction

Welcome to the new Tourism & Leisure Committee. I'm Caroline Darlington, the Tourism Manager, and here's a brief synopsis of what the Tourism Team delivers.

There are several key functions, specifically the destination marketing to a global audience via the Visit Weston website and target specific advertising campaigns and the in-resort service provision of a seasonal Visitor Information Centre (VIC) which serves the local, wider and business communities.

Investment and enhancements are ongoing with our destination website, most important is the modernisation of the website platform that was re-launched on 13th June 2018 to enhance the pictorial content due to the importance of image-led web pages. The website also includes Google Translate, ongoing SEO campaigns and an events submission facility to enable event organisers to publicise and promote their events as early as possible which has a positive impact on information available and website content.

The placement of target specific destination marketing campaigns has been secured covering our known key target market locations and these will be reported separately by Emma Williams, the Tourism Marketing Officer.

For the VIC, seasonal staff have been recruited for 2019 to provide front facing customer services. The VIC is also home to first aid and lost children within the iconic Tropicana building on Weston's seafront. The facility is open from May to October and jointly resourced as part of our ongoing Service Level Agreement that facilitates our partnership arrangement with North Somerset Council's Seafront & Events Team.

We support Archant, publishers of the Weston Mercury, with the production of an A4 destination guide (Explore) with local and national distribution channels. By popular demand a handy, pocket sized map has been produced which is available from our VIC along with a free accommodation finding service and information on local attractions, leaflets, bus timetables, ticket and souvenir sales.

7. Partnership Working

We are making strong inroads into expanding partnerships to new areas, including a number in Clevedon with potential new partners in the Portishead area. We are also in discussion with the new owners of Battleborough Grange, now known as The Grange. A broader mix of partner businesses is in hand, with recent signings of sporting and outdoor adventure activities bringing new avenues for Search Engine Optimisation for the Visit Weston website.

Our partnership 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.

The BID

The TM sits on the BID Steering Group that meets monthly. Visit Weston promotes the BID areas as Platinum partners. We have recently updated their pages on the Visit Weston website to include detailed information on the daytime economy and separately the night-time economy. This promotes independent shopping, restaurants, bars, entertainment etc.

NSC Seafront & Events Team

We enjoy an excellent business relationship with the entire team and have one or two of their staff members working with us behind the same counter in the VIC. We are updated on a monthly basis with all events booked on NSC property in Weston-super-Mare and we are instituting monthly operational meetings with their management during the season. They also work closely with us on the daily operation of the Waterpark under their SLA with the town council.

UK TIC Forum

There are plans to conduct the next meeting here in Weston in early June. This is a national association of Tourist Information Centres and Visitor Information Centres across the country, with the Chairman being based in the northeast. For that reason, many of their meetings are held at a vast distance from the southwest, so the Tourism Manager has established a regional forum for our part of the country. The forum continues to be useful in the with advisory and information emails being exchanged on a regular basis and frank discussions held quarterly on the challenges of operating in today's world of tourism.

8. Visitor Information Centre (VIC)

Opening for the season

The VIC opened on 6th April after a one week induction of all new seasonal staff and in readiness for the school holidays, some of which commenced on 6th April and others on 15th April. North Somerset Council's Seafront & Events Team placed staff at the VIC over the April weekends and from 1st May on a 7 day basis. It is envisaged that we shall remain open at least until October and we are arranging the rota accordingly, this will be reviewed at the end of August when we have a clearer picture of staffing budget allocations used to cover our main peak period.

Our new cohort of seasonal staff has been engaged in new initiatives to raise awareness levels of the VIC to both visitors and businesses alike. Seasonal staff are being tasked to make business calls to businesses, restaurants and bars in central Weston-super-Mare to ensure that they are aware of the location of the VIC and the benefits of becoming a partner.

Shop and Ticket Sales

Installation of a Ticket Master system is being trialled at the Museum prior to being installed at the VIC. We hope will assist with increasing revenue over the season. This will facilitate our efforts to procure ticket sales for local attractions to encourage them to sell their tickets in the VIC, for example we have commenced selling tickets for the Fairford Air Tattoo in July 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.

Visitor Numbers and Footfall

At 20th May 2019 we recorded a footfall of 5103 visitors to the VIC on the electronic footfall counter. This represents a healthy start for the year. The BID have installed a new footfall counting system using pings from mobile phones and we await confirmation of those numbers shortly.

The Land Train and Signage to the VIC

It has been confirmed that all attempts to save the land train have failed and it has ceased operation entirely. In combination with the lack of signage to the VIC this will potentially adversely affect visitor numbers coming along the Promenade both to the VIC and to the Water Park. Members may wish to consider whether alternatives should be considered.

Frequently Asked Questions

We have compiled a new spreadsheet for 2019 to record FAQ's. There follows a run-down 1098 people's inquiries during the month of April 2019.

Accommodation	17
Airshows	1
Art Trail	3
Bingo	3
Bird Watching	1
Boat trips	3
Booklets	1
Brean down walk	2
Bristol Botanical garden	1
Brochure request	14
Browsing	281
Bus Times	58
Campsite	2
Car parking	39
Casino	2
Cheddar caves	2
Children's activities	7
Combe walks (Goblin comb)	1
Cycling information	3
Day trip/activities	2
Directions	2
Directions Pitch/putt	1
Directions to Street Art in St James Street	2
Disabled parking	1

Disabled toilet	5
Dog friendly	6
Events	28
Fairground	3
Family attractions	3
First aid	3
Food	5
Food/museum	2
General info	2
General info and shopping	1
Ghost Walks	2
gifts	249
HELICOPTER MUSEUM	4
Job seekers (youths)	2
leaflets	187
leaflets & beach wheelchair	6
Leaflets & postcards	2
Looking for a property	3
Lost and found	6
Luxury caravan parks (residential)	4
Magnets	4
Map	25
Maps and walking routes	2
Maps of Weston	1
Name the pirate	4
Name the pirate	1
Name the pirate	7
Name the pirate	4
Pier	2
Places to eat	1
Postcards	2
Reggae festival	2
Research for future visit	1
RNLI shop	3
Road trips/museum/golf/accommodation list	2
Sand sculptures	2
School packages	1
SeaQuarium	7
Sea food eaterie	4
Shopping	8
State of bus shelters	1
Theatre/What's on	2
Things to do with children - & planning future trips here	4
Tickets	1
Toilets	2
Train times	1

Tropicana	2
Walks	38
What's on	12
Whats on/ Postcards	2
Wookey hole	2
WsM Museum	2

Caroline Darlington
Tourism Manager
21st May 2019

9. Report to the Tourism and Leisure Committee – 3rd June 2019

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

Report written by Emma Williams, Tourism Marketing Officer

Introduction

A warm welcome to the new committee members, please allow me to introduce myself. I am Emma Williams, the Tourism Marketing Officer for Visit Weston. I am responsible for the maintenance of the Visit Weston-super-Mare website, social media communications on behalf of Visit Weston and Destination Marketing advertising campaigns.

As previously agreed, the Committee are favouring a move away from in-print advertising in favour of digital promotion; integral to which is the Visit Weston-super-Mare website. I am hereby pleased to report the website visitor and traffic data analysis for March and April 2019.

Website Statistics

The Visit Weston website received almost 56,000 visitors in March and April of this year.

Visit Weston website support 'New Mind | Tell Us', have reported a turbulent period for all Destination Marketing Organisation's website traffic during this period, owing to a number of recent updates that have been implemented by Google. One in particular, launched around the 24-26th April, has detrimentally impacted many of our competitors; most seeing decreased traffic as a result. However New Mind continue to be encouraged by our website visitor numbers and were happy to report that we were not heavily affected by this particular Google update.

The update pertains to the implementation of new thresholds for website pages they deem to contain 'thin content', defined as pages with fewer than 300 words and a single image. I am currently working to increase the word and image count on as many pages of the Visit Weston website as possible, to eliminate the risk of our website being penalised by SEO (Search Engine Optimisation).

Traffic to the Visit Weston website continues to rise month on month as the high season approaches, and I am happy to report an increase to visitors versus March and April 2018 data, shown in parenthesis.

Period	Visitors	Unique Visitors	New Visitors	Top 10 Visitor IP address locations
1 st Mar – 30 th Apr	55,803 (46,211)	52,848 (43,158)	85% (84%)	London Bristol Chicago Birmingham (not set) Weston-super-Mare Bridgwater Southampton Cardiff Taunton

The Committee will note from the table above, the top ten locations of visiting IP addresses to Visit Weston, are once again nearby locations; as suggested in the previous reports, this data has influenced our focus for 2019/20 advertising campaigns. With the exception of Chicago – which accounts for 5% of the traffic during this period. Further analysis of visitors to the site from the US, shows a particular interest in web pages for family history-based events and information, as well as the beach and parks.

Top Ten Visited Website Pages

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

New Mind | Tell Us have recently announced a merger with Simpleview Inc., an American provider of integrated digital marketing solutions for destination marketing and destination management. It is hoped that the merger represents a unique opportunity for all Destination Marketing Operations supported by New Mind, to benefit from a truly global perspective of destination marketing and destination management. We will be kept up to date by New Mind as their merger goes through, with the relevant information on the benefits to Visit Weston specifically.

Social Media

Our social media content posted across the three main site – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram has achieved a reach of almost 209,436 throughout March and April. Total followers across the three sites at the time of this report (16th May) is 8,803, up by 572 since last reported on 18th March. This increase is a result of Visit Weston running several social media competitions and initiatives designed to increase follower numbers; current followers are encouraged to invites their friends to also follow our accounts to be entered into prize draws to receive prizes donated by Visit Weston partners including Brean Theme Park and the Tropicana Reggae Festival.

Facebook continues to provide the greatest impact and 'impressions' on our audience, a recent post publicising the reopening of the Water Adventure Play Park has been seen by over 22,000 people alone.

Post Details

Visit Weston
Published to News Feed on 17 March

Good news for all you Weston Water Babies, the Water Adventure Play Park on Kingsstone Road reopens on Good Friday, 15th April. Great value at just 12.95 for you & all day, group bookings available and with onsite refreshments. For more information on the new Play Park find it on our page.

<https://www.visit-westonmanagement.com/> <https://www.facebook.com/visitweston/>

Water Adventure Play Park
 - Open from 12th April to 31st September
 All day water play with slides, jumping, water cannons, water gun wars
 - Open from 9.30am until 4.30pm
 - Bring your own picnic & all over the park & cafe too!

Performance for your post

22,086 Reach	People Reached	
662 Interactions	Reactions, Comments & Shares	
260 Likes	74 Comments	168 Shares
22 Clicks	2 Clicks	20 Clicks
1 Video Views	1 Video Views	0 Video Views
268 Comments	126 On Page	140 On Page
114 Reactions	112 On Page	2 On Page
2,426 Post Views	Post Views	
222 Post Views	264 On Page	1,890 On Page

Account Feedback

2 Likes from [Profile]
 8 Reactions from [Profile]
 2 Shares from [Profile]

Considering that 97% of Visit Weston website referrals from social media, originate from Facebook, the aim throughout the high season, where more events take place and we receive more enquiries for accommodation, is to increase post engagement and follower numbers in a bid to continue driving traffic towards to the Visit Weston website.

From the continued analysis of our performance across digital platforms, I concluded that posts including attractive images and graphics were proving more successful. This considered Visit Weston has recently purchased a license for 'Canva', an online photo editing suite that enables us to create better unique content that is providing eye-catching to our audience. The image shown on the post for the Water Adventure Play Park was created with Canva, thus demonstrating the efficacy of the software.

Current and Forthcoming Advertising and Destination Marketing Campaigns

The Spring 2019 'Partner Display' campaign is currently active and runs until 10th June. This was scheduled to capture interest in Weston-super-Mare as the high season approaches, the Easter break, Bank Holidays and the run-up to the Air Festival weekend.

This initiative is an online advertising campaign working with Global Media and Entertainment Group. This organisation owns Classic FM, Heart Radio, LBC, Smooth Radio and partners with a number of large media brands including the Daily Mail, eBay, Amazon and Gumtree. Our advert will be displayed on websites belonging to these and other large brands.

We provided a list of three hundred 'key words' relating to our product – for example beach, holidays, pier etc. so that once searched for by an internet user in our target audience, they would be shown a Visit Weston banner advert. Again, as per our website users' data analysis, we will be targeting site visitors lying within a thirty-mile radius of the Severn Bridge and they will be shown the advert once more within a fortnight.

We are able to alter the advert content to suit our needs throughout the campaign; currently it shows a carousel of three images. These are of Grove Park, the beach and an offer at the Bay Café, each with accompanying text. By 29th April, the advert had already been seen by over 61,000 web users and we expect this number to approach 200,000 by the end of the campaign.



Our summer campaign is with 'Clear Channel', an outdoor advertising agency, that will launch thirteen digital screen advertisements to be displayed in July and August across key locations that

will provide the greatest impact and conversions to visitors to Weston-super-Mare. Again, this is from geographical data gathered showing the locations of people online interested in Weston

These 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-spots and on pedestrian shoppers in high footfall retail areas.

The final artwork for these advertisements will be finalised in June, but Clear Channel have provided some mock ups, included here:



Emerging Markets and Advertising Opportunities

As part of ongoing market research, I have detected a spike in interest in Weston-super-Mare from an area hitherto 'outside' our traditional geographical demographic (as previously outlined in the 'Clear Channel' campaign details). Expanding the top locations of visiting IP addresses to the website to 25 rather than 10, it shows that residents of Leeds are researching Weston. This is also reflected in the data mined from requests made for copies of the 'Explore' 2019 guide to be posted out to potential new visitors to the town. These two sets of data also show that interest from the Leeds area is also more significant than areas we have already advertised in, namely Worcester and Newport.

As road travel from West Yorkshire to Weston is fairly direct: M62 westbound, M6, M5, albeit expected to take around five hours, visitors from Leeds and the surrounding areas are more likely to be visiting for longer stays, rather than day trips, making this emerging market an ideal candidate to target. I have begun to explore this opportunity by contacting Visit Leeds and sending them a box of Explore guides to offer customers to their Visitor Information Centre. I will be seeking feedback from Visit Leeds as to the popularity of these guides and will follow up with appropriate action soon after. After recent developments in the English Football League, as Leeds United will be definitely play Bristol City twice again in the 2019/2020 football season, a match programme advert could be an avenue worthy of exploration.

Emma Williams
Tourism Marketing Officer
May 2019