

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD VIA ZOOM
ON MONDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2020**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.00 pm

PRESENT: Peter Crew (Chairman), John Crockford-Hawley, David Dash, Catherine Gibbons, David Hitchins, Peter McAleer, Alan Peak and Sonia Russe.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk), Caroline Darlington (Tourism Manager), Emma Williams (Tourism Marketing Officer), Fay Powell (Grounds Manager), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer and Office Manager) and Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk).

107	<p>Apologies of Absence and Notifications of Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ella Sayce with no substitution.</p> <p>Councillors Marc Aplin, James Clayton, and Marcia Pepperall were absent from the meeting.</p>
108	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
109	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on the 27th July 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.</p>
110	<p>Tourism Function Update</p> <p>The reports of the Tourism Manager and Tourism Marketing Officer October - December 2020 had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Tourism Manager reported that disaster recovery plans were being considered. The recent news of a vaccine being rolled out was fantastic and it was hoped to generate positivity. The team was ready to assist when and where it could and would await the next announcement from government on 16th December with regards to tiers.</p> <p>1 Events – Placemaking 2 Support for VW members 3 VW Partnership Working & Initiatives</p>

Placemaking meetings had been very active to elevate the town centre. The Visitor Economy team at NSC had recently announced their partnership with Visit Somerset, which was surprising to the Tourism Manager.

It was brought to member's attention that the council paid £1,500 per year to Visit Somerset for support and promotion of Weston-super-Mare on their website and upon analysis, that this had amounted to only 260 referrals to the Visit Weston website, which was very disappointing.

As part of their agreement with NSC, Visit Somerset have offered 40 free membership packages for NSC to distribute to local businesses at their discretion, which was in direct competition with Visit Weston. Visit Somerset had offered free memberships to members in the past, where free membership only lasted for 1 year and renewal costs were too high, thus they then rejoined Love Weston (as it was previously called). The council had resolved to extend members free membership, to be reviewed as a gesture of goodwill.

A member raised her disappointment that the council had joined Visit Somerset as they did not support coastline destinations and felt that the council should pull out of the membership.

The Vice Chairman asked if concerns over the number of referrals had been brought up at any board meetings held by Visit Somerset, and if the council had been invited to attend, as initially promised.

The Town Clerk advised that he had attended various board meetings of Visit Somerset and found them to be useful in passing on information. He advised continuing with the membership for a further year to establish better links.

The Chairman added that previously, some members of North Somerset Council had not wanted to rejoin Visit Somerset.

A suggested alteration to the Visit Weston partnership scheme might be to emulate the offer between the department at the BID. Visit Weston had given the BID four 'zonal' Platinum memberships, promoting all businesses in designated areas, rather than individually, making it a more affordable option.

A member added that she felt that a 'zonal' approach to the town centre planning would be beneficial to the town, its businesses and visitors, unfamiliar with the area. And that it would be better to know what they would find in what location and referred to Clevedon and Clifton as good examples of this approach.

The Tourism Manager advised that this information was available on the Visit Weston website. And that it would be possible to promote businesses in this way in the future, should the partnership scheme evolve as suggested. The Tourism Manager added that she was in communications with Weston College to develop a short film with students, promoting the town and what to do in Weston, which could be shown onboard coaches travelling to Weston, and that coach companies were very excited about this prospect.

The Chairman was in favour of offering group memberships and highlighted the need for better town centre signage.

The Chairman then proposed that an 80% discount be given to Visit Weston members for the year 2021/2022.

A vote was then taken and **carried**.

110.1 RESOLVED: That an 80% discount be offered to Visit Weston members within the 2021/22 budget.

4 VIC Location

The Tourism Manager explained that the future location of the VIC would have an impact income for the tourism department, as she predicted a reduction income from partnership fees following this year's refunds and the financial difficulties many businesses are experiencing.

The Chairman informed that the item would be discussed under item 5.3 of the agenda.

5 Destination Advertising

The Tourism Marketing Officer directed members to the contract renewal section of her report, where it advised that 2020/2021 was the third and final year of the existing contract with the department's website provider, Simpleview. The department had recently met with the account manager to discuss retention and/or renewal options for the Visit Weston website.

Simpleview were understandably keen to retain the contract with Visit Weston and had provided three renewal cost options for consideration as outlined in the report.

There would be a three-month notice period if the council chose not to renew the contact, and so it was felt timely to bring it to member's attention at this point and considering the workload and timescales involved with the procurement process. With this in mind, it was the recommendation of Officers to renew the contract for 1 year. The council had a good working relationship with Simpleview and they were the market leaders providing many value added services.

The Chairman proposed the recommendation, which was seconded and

A vote was then taken and **carried**.

110.2 RESOLVED: To renew the website contact with Simpleview for 1 year at the cost of £10,465.

A member questioned the accuracy and value of website analytics and whether the council was seeing a worthwhile return on its associated costs. The member also suggested that an external audit might be necessary.

The Tourism Manger informed that the Visit Weston website had over 1 million hits that were all tracked and information was regularly reported. Simpleview shared extremely good information with Visit Weston.

The Tourism Marketing Officer advised that the analysis was undertaken by herself via Google Analytics, as well as by Simpleview, and was constantly monitored. The data was analysed at depth, and added that to illustrate an

	<p>example, reported that there had been a 25% decrease in web traffic on the previous year, but noted that last year 26% of all traffic was enquiries into events that had not taken place in 2020 due to Covid.</p> <p>The Tourism and Marketing Officer informed that the only advertising campaign undertaken, was with Pear Communications. Two campaigns had been budgeted for Easter and early Summer.</p> <p>110.3 RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
<p>111.</p>	<p>Parks and Play Areas</p> <p>The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated.</p> <p>5.1 Parks and Play Areas</p> <p>The Grounds Manager advised that the Winter maintenance program was underway.</p> <p>5.2 Water Park</p> <p>The Water Park had been subject to mass spray paint vandalism which needed to be removed. This had been reported to the Police and there had been other incidents reported around the town. A meeting that week was scheduled to discuss the issue further. The Rangers had added the Water Park to their patrols to help target this.</p> <p>A works programme agreement was in place with Somerset Wood Recycling and a meeting was scheduled to discuss artwork.</p> <p>5.3 Water Park Café</p> <p>Request to review license</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated to members earlier that day.</p> <p>The Town Clerk apologised for the late submission of the report and for the benefit of members reiterated the report.</p> <p>In 2017 the council provided an improved refreshment kiosk with indoor as well as outdoor seating areas. A new licence covering the three summer seasons 2019, 2020 and 2021 was granted commencing in 2019-20 and was due to run until 2021-22, ending in March 2022.</p> <p>Business had been badly affected by the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020 and the concession licence holder had requested a change to the terms of his licence. Emphasising the lack of trade for much of this year and argued that the ability to be able to trade throughout the year. There was one summer season remaining on the current agreement and the loss of the current year's trading had completely undermined the five-year business projections for the investment made in the Water Park. The loss of trading coupled with further improvements made during February and early March consumed what little profit derived from the summer.</p>

The kiosk roof had been leaky since day one and continued to do so, and the security shutters needed improving. In return for a 10-year lease, with the usual 5-year review, the concessionaire would assume responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the kiosk, including completion of current repairs and all future maintenance. He had suggested a starting point for rent of the already agreed amount for 2021 £7,000, followed by an increase up to £8,900 for years 2022-25 inclusive, this represented an annual increase of 10% up to 2025. However, this would depend on operation of the Water Pad and admissions similar to 2019.

The Town Clerk had carefully considered this in discussion with the Chairman and colleague officers. The concessionaire's request to be completely rent free in 2020 was a little ambitious, given many landlords and others have been offering 3 months' rent free and North Somerset have not even done that with their concessionaires.

There was significant Government help available for small and self-employed businesses.

Looking towards 2021. There was now hope for a vaccine sooner than anticipated, plus mass testing, which together would give realistic hope of a full season's operation being possible from April 2021. There was a remaining degree of uncertainty about next year but Covid permitting it was the intention to both open the park and operate the splash pad if legally allowed to do so, and by using its own staff to ensure the toilets were open for reasonable times throughout the season.

Taking into account these considerations, The Town Clerk recommend the committee to offer an agreement for a 50% reduction in the rent for 2020 plus a 50% reduction in rent for 2021. The reduction for 2021 to be whatever the outcome re coronavirus, so would apply even if the concessionaire had a full year's operation, and overall he would have had a reduction of 1 whole year's rent during the term of his concession licence for the water park café.

With regards to the request for a 10-year extension of the current 3-year licence, The Town Clerk felt it would be premature to agree any extension at this time, as it could not be known what future trading conditions for the café or the water park would be in 2021 or beyond and a 10-year extension would tie the town council's hands long into the future.

Replacement of Entrance Hut with a new Cabin

In 2021 it was proposed not to renew the previous contract with North Somerset to operate the Water Park making a saving of £35,000. Instead by combining the budgets for seasonal staffing of the Water Park and VIC, an efficiency saving could be made with a joint group of staff providing visitor information, managing admission to the water park and if capacity allowed, possibly acting as 'Weston Welcomers' along the seafront directing people to the water park and other attractions.

NSC currently provided a temporary hut for their staff in order to operate the park directly, the town council would need to provide its own cabin (this would require the consent of NSC under the lease). The Tourism Manager has been consulted

and supports the proposition that, whether or not the VIC remained in the Tropicana or a different more central location, a supplementary visitor information facility could be made available at the water park. Budget provision of up to £25,000 was proposed in 2021/22 for a larger cabin with double doors that would have space for VIC leaflets and materials and be more accessible in the event of lingering Covid restrictions.

The Grounds Manager reported that exploration into utilising Clara's Café to provide uniform catering across sites was being undertaken.

In response to a member, regarding the council's ready position if the offer was declined. The Grounds Manager informed that staff were eager and it was achievable.

A vote was then taken and **carried**.

111.1 RESOLVED:

1. That the café concessionaire be offered a 50% reduction in rent for each of the years 2020/21 and 2021/22, with a decision by required before the Policy and Finance Committee on the 14th December 2020.
2. That no agreement be given at the present time to extend the café licence from 2021.
3. That the Water Park be directly operated by the council in 2021 and a new cabin be installed for combined park admissions and visitor information.

The Grounds Manager reported that Ellenborough Park West was officially open and had received much interest.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00 pm.

Signed: Dated:

Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee

4.1

Winter 2021 General Update

- All Visit Weston Partners have been contacted on multiple occasions with information on business support grants from the Treasury, most recently on 20th January.
- The Tourism Manager was interviewed by BBC Radio Bristol in January asking if we would re-instate our “Don’t Visit Weston” campaign. It was made clear that we shall run a “Do Visit Weston” campaign as soon as lockdown ends if we are in Tier 2.
- The VIC continues to operate as a “virtual” VIC with phones being answered via a divert during office hours 6 days a week.
- Weekly Place Agency Project Group meetings were attended by both the Tourism Manager and the Tourism Marketing Officer
- The BID Steering Group was attended by the Tourism Manager. It was agreed that the BID Levy will be waived for independent, wet led pubs/clubs who could not diversify e.g. lack of kitchen.
- NSC have confirmed that we can re-occupy the VIC in the Tropicana and we are working on an action plan for staffing and aiming to open by July subject to lockdown being lifted.

4.2 Looking Forward Tourism Spring/Summer 2021

- This message was posted on Facebook on 17/01/21 by one of our guest houses
- We must show our support to the hard-hit hospitality businesses, including our own in-house services
- We need to stand out from the crowd and attract UK visitors
- “Do Visit Weston” campaign, “Weston Welcomes You”



4.2 Looking Forward : Events and Promotion

The Tourism Manager and the Tourism Marketing Officer sit on the Weston Place Agency Project Group along with NSC Events and PR teams, Weston Artspace, the BID, Culture Weston and the Sovereign Centre. This is a cross-agency collaboration to mutually promote events and services with the WSM vision as an overarching model. Current projects are:

- GLOW light trail (8 Feb) through Grove Park (Theatre Orchard)
- Whirligig (19th July) in the Italian Gardens (Theatre Orchard)
- High Street Window Project (aiming for March) (Weston Artspace)
- Memory Bank and digital Space Bar due to open in Sovereign Centre

CONFIRMED EVENTS FOR 2021

- Eat Weston 17th April
- Dog Show 8th May
- Car Show 9th May
- Circus Zyair 5th-9th May
- Street Market 28th-31st May
- Air Festival 19th-20th June
- Pride 3rd + 4th July
- Real Ale Festival 23rd-25th July
- Dairy Festival 31st July + 1st August
- Sea Shanty & Folk Festival 6-8th August
- Beach Rugby 13th – 15th August



Sponsorship Opportunities

Friday 13th-Sunday
15th August
Weston-s-Mare
Beach

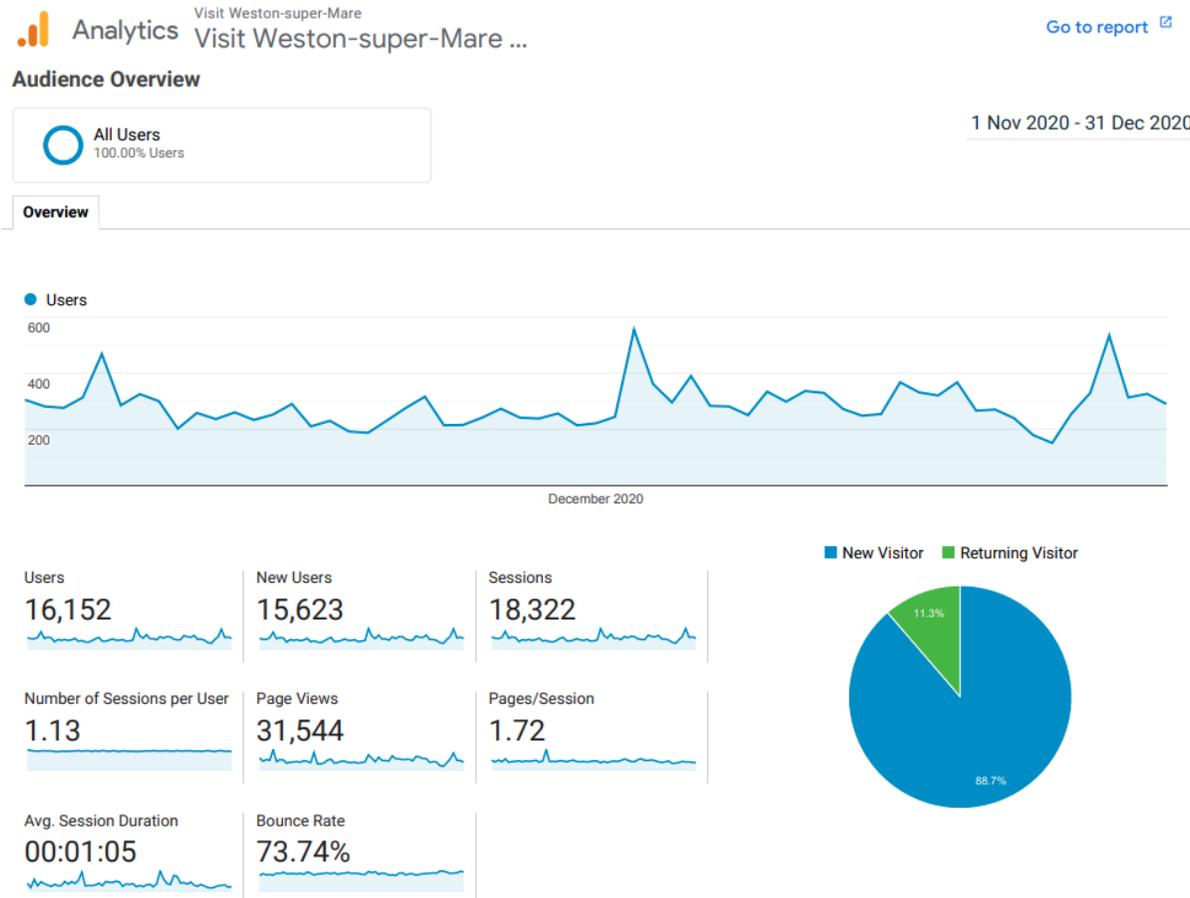
**Join us
for a
Beach Rugby
Festival
weekend**

- Main Event Sponsor
- Welcome Reception & Registration Sponsor

The advertisement features a background image of two beach rugby players on a sandy beach. A male player in a red and dark blue jersey is on the left, and a female player in a blue and white patterned jersey is on the right, holding a blue and white beach rugby ball. In the background, there is a large, ornate building with a clock tower, likely the Weston-s-Mare Pier building, situated on a pier over the sea.

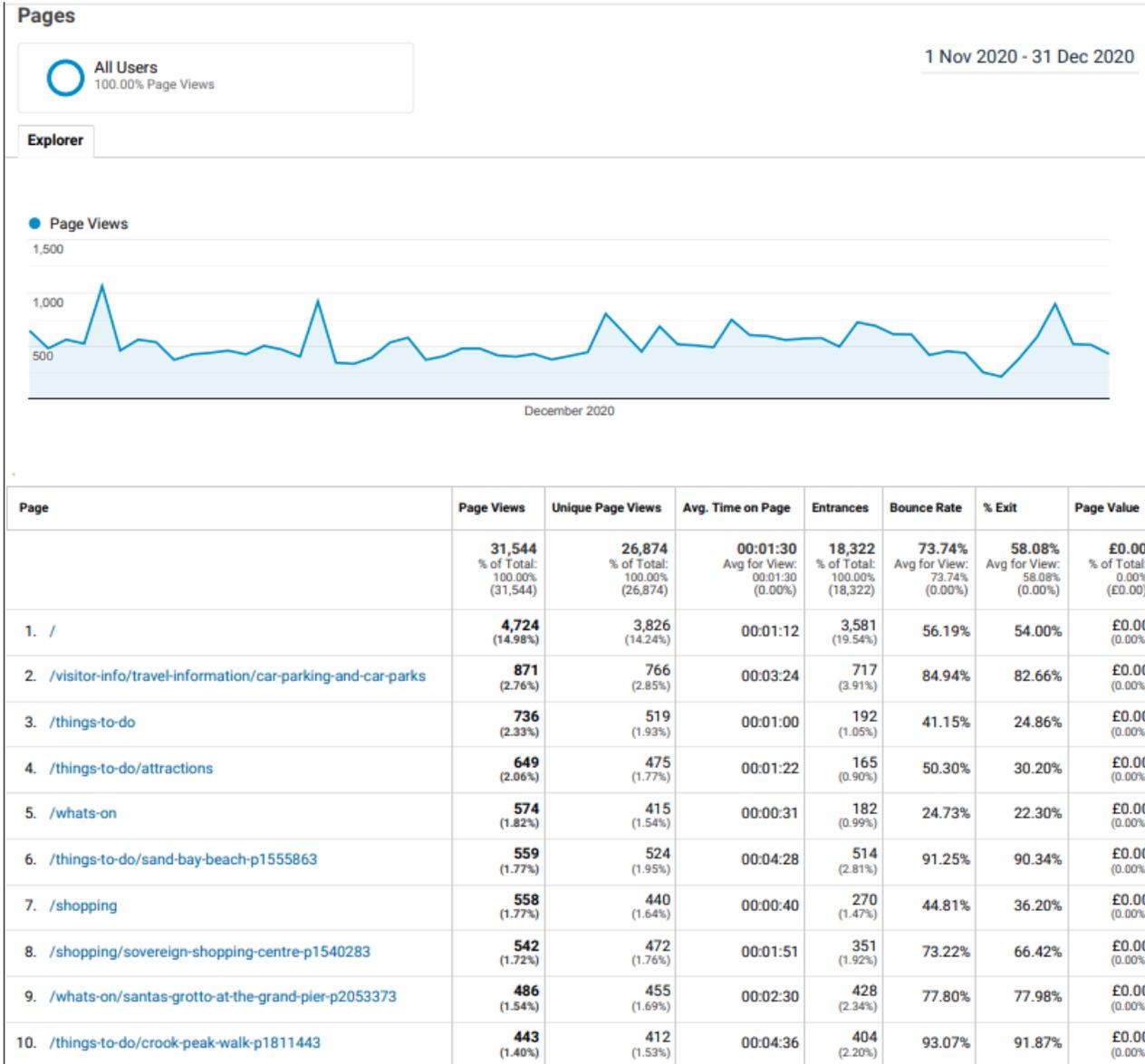
4.3 Visit Weston Website & Social Media

In response to enquiries from Members as to the provenance of Visit Weston’s data and analysis of our digital presence, please find a selection of slides from Google Analytics that monitor and report on our website visitors.



- During the reporting period (1 Nov – 31 Dec) the website received **16,152** unique visitors
- Of the 16k individuals that viewed the site, **15,623** were first time visitors
- These visitors visited the site **18,322** in total
- Between these individuals, they browsed **31,544** pages in total
- This averages out at **1.7** different pages viewed per visitor

4.3 Visit Weston Website & Social Media



- This slide lists the top 10 best performing pages during the reporting period
- Unsurprisingly, the pages listed relate to facilities and services still 'relevant' during the various Covid-19 restrictions during November and December, namely;
 - *Car Parking*
 - *Shopping and The Sovereign Centre*
 - *Sand Bay Beach*
 - *Crook Peak Walk*
- With the prospect of a better 2021 for tourism on the horizon, it is hoped that the content viewed returns to a more diverse scope. We have begun listing high-profile events that are scheduled to take place this year, and have new pages to develop alongside the NSC Placemaking Agency.

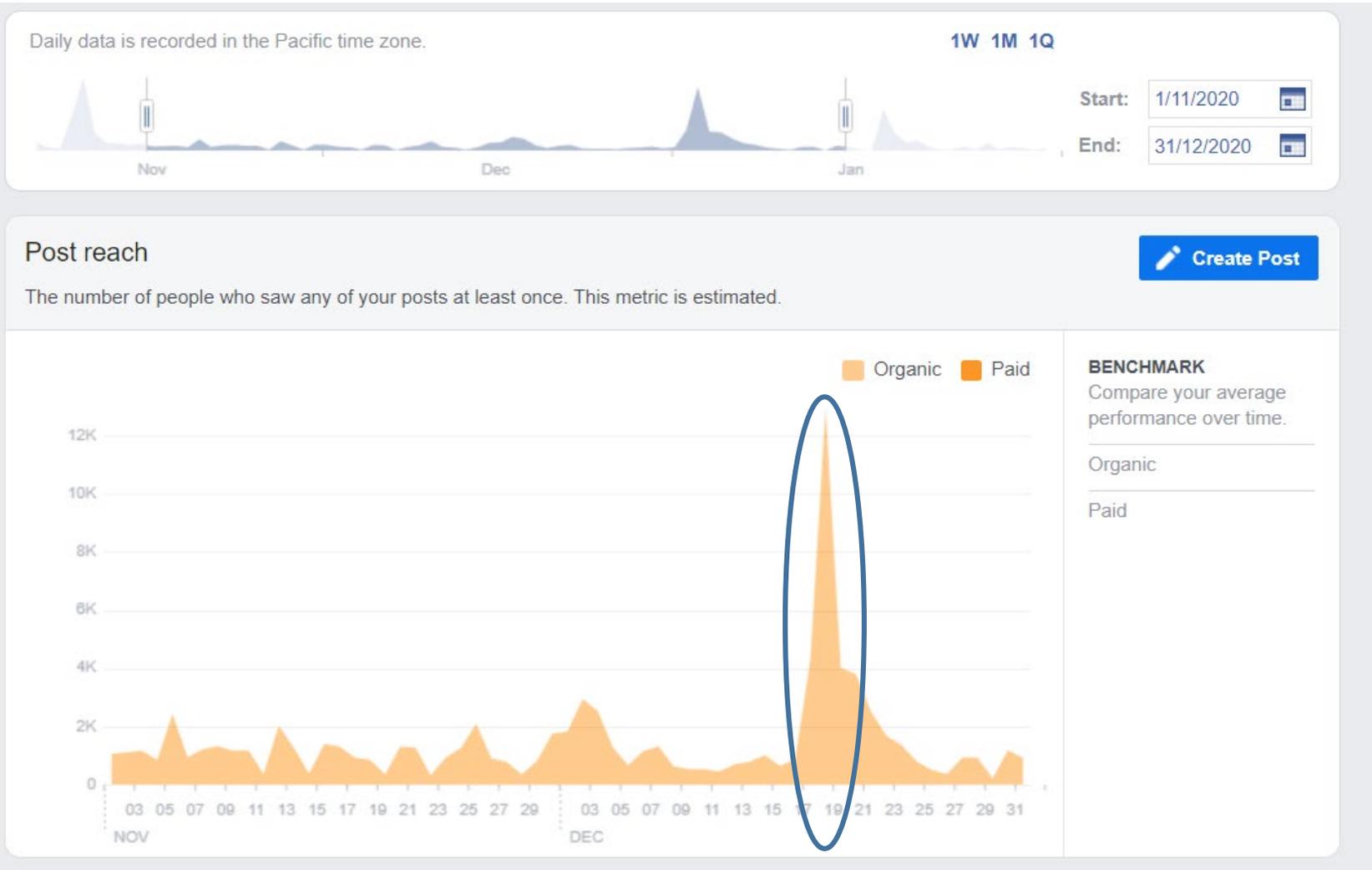
4.3 Visit Weston Website & Social Media

City ?	Acquisition		
	Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?
	16,152 % of Total: 100.00% (16,152)	15,628 % of Total: 100.03% (15,623)	18,322 % of Total: 100.00% (18,322)
1. Bristol	3,505 (21.24%)	3,348 (21.42%)	3,919 (21.39%)
2. London	2,290 (13.88%)	2,127 (13.61%)	2,485 (13.56%)
3. (not set)	1,732 (10.49%)	1,647 (10.54%)	1,943 (10.60%)
4. Weston-super-Mare	1,368 (8.29%)	1,249 (7.99%)	1,510 (8.24%)
5. Taunton	524 (3.17%)	488 (3.12%)	590 (3.22%)
6. Clevedon	390 (2.36%)	366 (2.34%)	436 (2.38%)
7. Birmingham	367 (2.22%)	345 (2.21%)	393 (2.14%)
8. Bridgwater	366 (2.22%)	345 (2.21%)	417 (2.28%)
9. Bath	216 (1.31%)	207 (1.32%)	232 (1.27%)
10. Glastonbury	178 (1.08%)	172 (1.10%)	194 (1.06%)

- This slide shows the top 10 locations of visitors to the website.
- As ever, Members are requested to note that both 'London' and 'Not Set' are anomalies presented by Google. These two entries refer to web users whose location is not available, or whose Internet Service Provider (ISP) defaults to the location of its main server i.e. usually London. However, any visitors genuinely from London, would also be collated here.
- With the exception of 'Birmingham', all locations are fairly local; demonstrating the understanding from our visitor market that we must 'stay local'.

4.3 Visit Weston Website & Social Media

- This slide shows the number of occasions our content on Facebook has been viewed during November and December 2020. This is referred to as 'Reach'
- The total reach of our content is **63,675**.
- As the spike suggests, there was a particularly far-reaching post during this time, which attained a reach of over **23,000**
- This post was a video, created by the Tourism Marketing Officer. It featured a light-hearted singalong about a Weston donkey that wished she could be a reindeer. It was shared almost **200** times and viewed **10,600** times.



4.3 Visit Weston Website & Social Media

Our social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) continue to gain followers, enabling our message and platform for promotion, to reach a greater audience.

Facebook has recently announced a change in how it gauges the efficacy of pages. It now suggests that 'Page Followers' should be monitored, as opposed to 'Page Likes', as we have done before. The change allows Facebook page administrators to differentiate between its audience members that have opted in to see all content, and those that have simply expressed a predilection for the page, without necessarily seeing - or engaging, with its content.

In the case of Visit Weston, this works to our advantage, as we have more Page Followers than Page Likes.

Our current social media audience is **12,167** accounts, broken down as shown below.



Facebook:
5608



Instagram:
1502



Twitter:
5044

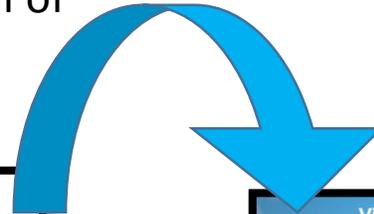


LinkedIn:
13

4.3 Visit Weston Website & Social Media

The Visit Weston website has recently undergone a series of design upgrades, chiefly the launch of the new header and menu design. The old site design show here...

...Now looks more contemporary, professional and pleasing to the eye, with edge-to-edge photographs, overlaid with a simpler menu.



I am happy to give a brief demonstration of the new site functionality, should anybody wish.

4.4 Destination Marketing

Owing to the 2nd national lockdown, we took the decision to delay launching the marketing strategy outlined in our previous report. The Tourism Marketing Officer and the Tourism Manager met with Pear Communications to discuss implementing a more local campaign aimed at BS21, 22, 23 and parts of BS24 via local supermarket, bus stop advertising and household leafleting. This campaign can be launched quickly as soon as lockdown is eased with a potential return to a tier system.

The TMO and TM have outlined a robust and dynamic strategy for the next year, with a focus on supporting the economic recovery of our tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses. Our destination marketing plan is designed to bring WsM to the forefront against competition from other English resorts. We are including input from hospitality businesses in our plans for a “Do Visit Weston” campaign.

Current aspirations include campaigns with:



5.1 Planned renovations of Waterpark

Report for Tourism and Leisure - written by Fay Powell

For the last 6 months the Grounds Team have been carrying out detailed inspections of WSMTC play areas and plan maintenance for existing equipment, replacing equipment and enhancing play areas with improved litter bins, signage, fences and seating.

Due to COVID the team concentrated on play areas that did not require full refurbishment and instead enhance what was existing and replacing small items that were easy to do so.

An area the team wanted to concentrate on was the Waterpark site, following some large scale graffiti and vandalism, orders were placed to repair damaged equipment. It was felt that whilst structurally sound the wooden play equipment looked tired and miss matched where graffiti had removed by 'ice blasting'.

The Team met with Somerset Wood Recycling before Christmas to identify benches that needed repairing and ones that needed replacing, most of this work is being undertaken under our Service Level Agreement with Somerset Wood Recycling.

The team felt it would be good to refresh the wood and discussed their ideas with a local artist (images to be shared at meeting) the work would bring new life to the equipment and out buildings within the Waterpark and enhance the fantastic offer for visitors and residents.

The work would be carried out (weather dependent) before Easter 2021 and would be sealed with a protective paint, so if in the future it is graffitied the Grounds Team would be able to wipe away without damaging the paint work underneath or requiring a third party to remove.

Recommendation – To agree to the painting of existing equipment

5.2 Provision of VIC cabin in Waterpark

Report for Tourism and Leisure - written by Fay Powell

Example of Waterpark VIC Structure (for information only not exact specification)



Written by Deputy Town Clerk – extract from Expenditure and Governance Report 28/01/21

Timescale between February - May 2021 estimated if approved by P & F

Working with the Assistant Town clerk – public services, there is recognition of a more effective and efficient option of operating services at both the VIC and Waterpark by combining staff resources to cover both and not renew the SLA with NSC for the Waterpark staffing. This has been fully costed and forms part of the budget proposal for 2021 / 2022.

In order to achieve this there would need to be a new facility at the front of the Water park entrance to accommodate both admissions to the park (In charging season) alongside a VIC satellite point which would offer a reduced but similar facility at this end of the seafront.

Plans are being drawn but the structure envisaged to achieve this would be something like the attached photo to provide an idea of what can be done. It is key this is more than just a shed but also that it meets with the ability to be 'non-permanent' due to the flood defensive systems that are within the parks boundary. Services are already at the site so would just be moved to accommodate the new structure and make it full heated and operational (phones etc.) as a VIC.

A provision cost for these works has been included in the budget for 2021 / 2022.

Recommendation – To note the information in this report.

5.3 Waterpark entry fees during 2021

Report for Tourism and Leisure - written by Fay Powell

In 2020 the Waterpark spent a period of time shut between March and July due to the national lockdown, it then faced restrictions regarding numbers that could access the splash pad area which is considered and treated the same as a swimming pool. It therefore was not operational for the season, which was understandably a disappointment to residents and visitors.

Still in 2021 we are facing a period of uncertainty. The Waterpark requires detailed planning and this year will be the first year we do not have a Service Level Agreement with North Somerset Council and instead manage the site in-house with existing and seasonal staff.

Like many services we do not have a definitive plan and therefore staffing of the site will be challenging and will need to adapt to change with possible Government announcements that could mean closing of the Waterpark or multiple changes to entry numbers. There are so many unknown factors at this time that we feel we should ensure the play area aspect and park is opened all year, with the splashpad opening when permitted, which at this time is unknown.

2021 will see the 10-year anniversary of the Waterpark, with this and the uncertainty of the pandemic, we ask that you consider having free entry should the splashpad be open. This will mean the following:

- We will be able to run the site with minimal staff as no money will need to be taken
- If we close at short notice, we have flexibility with limited staff
- If the splash pad is open and free of charge it will be a positive news story for our residents and visitors to the town, a good marketing opportunity for a newly refurbished site (if 5.1 is passed)
- A way of celebrating 10 years of the Waterpark
- Helping families enjoy an attraction free of charge at what is a difficult time for some.

Recommendation – To consider No charges for Waterpark entry for season of 2021

Parks and Play Areas Report

Report for Tourism and Leisure - written by Fay Powell

1. Update on sites

Orders have been raised and work implemented or scheduled for the following:

- New swivel for the cantilever swing in the top of Ashcombe Park - Collected from GB Sport 27-28/11/20.
- Grove Park Gates - Works completed 08/12/20
- Clarence Park Gates and Spring riders - Works completed 09/12/20
- Ashcombe Park Lower Repairs to free rider – Works due to commence w/c 18/01/21
- Hutton Moor new gates - Waiting on goods in order for works to commence
- Broadway new gates – Waiting for goods (ETA w/c 18/01/21) in order for works to commence
- Uphill new gates – Waiting for goods (ETA w/c 18/01/21) in order for works to commence
- Water Park – Surfacing Repairs
- Castle Batch – Quotes are being sought for the removal and replacement of a bicycle roundabout and seesaw
- Millennium Green - Quotes are being sought for the removal and replacement of a Junior Multiplay Unit and Supernova
- Ashcombe Park Lower – Quotes are being sought for the replacement of the perimeter fence.

The fencing at Uphill play area is completed and new signs are being ordered.

Inspections and repairs are still being carried out and logged on our PSS Live system.

Recommendation – Members please read and note the report.