

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD VIA ZOOM
ON MONDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2021**

Meeting Commenced: 7.03 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.05 pm

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

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

173	<p>Apologies of Absence and Notifications of Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sonia Russe with no substitution.</p> <p>Councillors Marc Aplin, Ella Sayce, and Marcia Pepperall were absent from the meeting.</p>
174	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
175	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on the 7th December 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Proposed: Councillor Peter McAleer Seconded: Councillor Alan Peak</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.</p>
176	<p>Tourism Function Update</p> <p>The reports of the Tourism Manager and Tourism Marketing Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda. A slide show had been created by the Officers and was screen-shared to all attendees.</p> <p>176.1 Winter 2021 General Update</p> <p>The Tourism Manager reported that support was being offered to local businesses, including Visit Weston partners, in relation to sourcing and applying for grants from North Somerset Council. The Tourism Manager went on to report how the tourism team were preparing to launch promotional campaigns for the resort once lockdown was lifted and how they would continue to respond to enquiries and from the public in the meantime.</p>

176.2 Looking Forward Tourism Spring/Summer 2021

In reference to a social media post written by a Visit Weston partner, the Tourism Manager went on to report how promotion of events in the town, would play a large part in the support for local businesses, especially accommodation providers. NSC had published a list of high-profile events that were scheduled to take place throughout 2021 and that should members require this list, it could be supplied on request.

The Weston-super-Mare Pride event may become an online-only event, and further announcements would be made in due course.

The Chairman advised that Yeovilton Airshow had recently been cancelled and that this may have an impact on the likelihood of running the Weston Airshow.

The Tourism Marketing Officer advised that these key events from NSC were already published on the events pages of the Visit Weston website.

176.3 Visit Weston Website and Social Media

The Tourism Marketing Officer reported on the Key Performance Indicators for the Visit Weston website and social media accounts. Noting that the furthest-reaching post on Facebook in December had been seen over 20,000 times. The top 10 locations of website visitors were presented, with the Tourism Marketing Officer reporting that Chicago, Illinois had been the eleventh highest location. Visitors to the site had been engaging most prevalently with the pages relating to outdoor pursuits e.g. walking and local landmarks such as Crooks Peak.

A member enquired as to whether consideration had been given to utilising the Social Media app 'TikTok'. The Tourism Marketing Officer replied that she did not use TikTok herself, but that it would be a good platform to engage with a younger audience and perhaps could be delegated to a tourism or marketing student at Weston College, once students returned to in-person tuition.

The Visit Weston website had recently undergone an update altering the layout of banner images on the site pages. The Tourism Marketing Officer demonstrated the new home page design and described how the new menus were more user-friendly and easier to navigate, as well being in line with WCAG 2.0 accessibility guidelines for public sector websites.

A member commented that they had visited the site ahead of the meeting and agreed that the new design was bolder and looked much better. However, that the listings featured on the 'Things to Do' page showed many activities outside of Weston-super-Mare and questioned whether these should feature more local activities. The Tourism Marketing Officer informed that this was likely a product of the algorithm for Google search results, populating commonly searched-for words in areas such as Bristol and Wells. These listings could be altered easily and could be actioned once activities and attractions in Weston-super-Mare reopened.

Additional to the circulated reports, the Tourism Manager requested permission from the Chairman to seek approval for an alteration to the current parameters for listing businesses on the website.

Permission was granted.

The Tourism Manager reported that consideration had been given to opening up listings to all businesses in Weston, regardless of whether they were a Visit Weston partner at present. This would boost content on the website and offer free advertising and support to local businesses.

The Chairman agreed this would be a positive action. Offering one year's free membership to the partnership scheme, on the proviso they retained paid membership thereafter, would be a fair agreement.

The Chairman therefore proposed this as a motion, which was not opposed by members and was **carried**.

.1 RESOLVED: That partnership fees would be waived to new businesses listing on the Visit Weston website for one year, if a Bronze membership was committed to for 2022/23.

176.4 Destination Marketing

As the situation with lockdown continued, the Tourism Marketing Officer reported there were no changes to the currently-active destination marketing campaigns. Careful consideration had been given to forthcoming campaigns, that would hopefully feature advertising at televised sporting events held in Summer 2021.

.2 RESOLVED: That the reports of the Tourism Manager and Tourism Marketing Officer were noted.

The Tourism Manager sought permission from the Chairman to discuss an additional item, not featured within the reports.

Further slides had been prepared and were screen-shared with the meeting.

The Tourism Manager reported that there was surplus remaining in the Destination Marketing budget for 2020/21 which could be utilised to promote Visit Weston in a new and unique way. By purchasing one or more Tuk Tuk vehicles, they could be used as mobile Tourist Information Centres – or 'Tic Tic's.

The vehicles were available to purchase as electric-only vehicles or 200cc petrol engine vehicles, and were priced accordingly. The vehicles were able to be driven in pedestrianised zones owing to their three-wheel design and so could be driven, parked-up and visible in high footfall areas such as the promenade and Alexandra Parade. Staff using the Tuk Tuks would be stocked with maps, brochures and leaflets to distribute to the public.

A member commented that similar eye-catching vehicles were used successfully for other purposes in resorts such as Brighton and enquired whether the petrol-fuelled Tuk Tuks could be modified to run on greener Biofuels, rather than purchase a costlier electric version. The Tourism Manager agreed this could be investigated.

	<p>The Chairman agreed the purchase would be a useful asset to the council, and would be utilized in other ways, including catering at Weston Museum and staff moving between sites.</p> <p>The Chairman therefore proposed this as a motion, which was not opposed by members and was carried.</p> <p>.3 RESOLVED: That one or more Tuk Tuk vehicles be purchased by Visit Weston before 31st March 2021.</p>
<p>177</p>	<p>Parks and Play Areas</p> <p>The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated.</p> <p>177.1 Planned Renovations of Water Park</p> <p>The Grounds Manager reported that over the past 6months, the grounds team carried 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.</p> <p>Due to COVID the team concentrated on play areas that did not require full refurbishment and instead enhance what was existing and replaced small items that were easy to do.</p> <p>An area the team wanted to concentrate on was the Waterpark site, following some large scale graffiti and vandalism and orders had been placed to repair damaged equipment. It was felt that whilst structurally sound, the wooden play equipment looked tired and miss matched where graffiti had been removed by ‘ice blasting’.</p> <p>The team met with Somerset Wood Recycling before Christmas to identify benches that needed repairing and replacing, most of the work was being undertaken under the Service Level Agreement.</p> <p>The team felt it would be good to refresh the wood and discussed their ideas with Martin D’Arcy a local artist who was interested in artwork designs to plant room and play equipment. This would bring new life to the equipment and out buildings within the Waterpark and enhance the fantastic offer for visitors and residents.</p> <p>A quote for £7,000 had been received and he work would be carried out (weather dependent) before Easter 2021 and would be sealed with a protective paint, if in the event it was vandalised with graffiti, it would be able to wipe away without damaging the paint work underneath or requiring a third party to remove.</p> <p>The Community and Grounds Administrator reported that the artist was extremely enthusiastic and was very keen on working with the community on his projects.</p> <p>A member enquired whether the designs had already been chosen, or whether it was an opportunity to engage with local children to select their favourite designs.</p> <p>The Grounds Manager advised that the submitted designs showed a new 3D effect to the castle, with muted colours on the repaired and refreshed wood, including anti-graffiti coatings. However, a mural was also planned for the plant</p>

room wall and she would be open to further designs being requested and put to a community public vote/poll for children.

The Chairman suggested having four designs to choose from, and for Officers to liaise with the Weston & Somerset Mercury to publicise the public poll.

The Community and Grounds Administrator requested clarification as to whether the committee wished to see the four designs before they were made public. The Chairman requested that the designs could be emailed to committee members for reference, before releasing to the public.

The Tourism Marketing Officer suggested that Facebook polls were a useful, easy and free way to gauge public opinion, especially as the Water Park's Facebook following was substantial and that this could help boost engagement across all council services.

.1 RESOLVED: To seek further designs for the Water Park artwork from Martin D'Arcy and release to the public for a public children's' vote.

177.2 Provision of VIC cabin in Water Park

.2 RESOLVED: That the report featuring the artist impressions of the new structure being built at the Water Park was approved by Members.

177.3 Water Park Entry Fees 2021

The Grounds Manager apologised for an inaccuracy on the previously circulated report, adding that rather than a waiving of Water Park entry fees for 2021, discretion was being sought for flexibility with fees.

The Chairman advised that a margin of 50% flexibility was already approved with the councils set fees and charges, but to remove all fees for the year, would need to be presented to the Policy and Finance Committee.

177.4 Update on all Play Areas

The Grounds Manager reported that there had been no refurbishment work to any play equipment in the last twelve months. Instead all sites had been improved and orders placed to replace /refresh park equipment including new bins and fences.

Funds of up to £100,000 were available to begin plans on a new inclusive play area, suitable for children with mobility issues.

The Chairman added that it had been hoped that Big Worle would work in collaboration for the development of a new play area and that the land to the rear of the Campus, would be worth consideration, especially given its proximity to Baytree School.

The Grounds Manager reported that she had met with Mary Morgan of Big Worle and that they were aware of the plans. It was agreed that the land by the Campus at Locking Castle would be a suitable site, especially as there would be ample parking close-by, which would be important for parents/carers with children in wheelchairs or using mobility aids. It was also important that any site selected was

	<p>able to house tall gates and fences around the play area, for maximum security and protection for vulnerable children.</p> <p>A member suggested that it would be advantageous to confer with parent and carer forums locally, to gain a better understanding of the desired requirements for an inclusive play area and was this was noted by Officers.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.05 pm.</p> <p>Signed: Dated:</p> <p>Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee</p>

Tourism & Leisure Committee – April 2021

Agenda Items 4.1 – 4.4



Visit 
Weston-super-Mare


4.1 – Spring 2021 Update

- A meeting between NSC Place Agency senior staff, their Executive Members, Cllr Mike Solomon and Cllr Mark Canniford was held to explore collaboration through the Weston Place Agency with Weston Town Council. This will be followed-up with a presentation from WTC in response to their presentation to us.
- The VIC continues to operate as a “virtual” VIC with phones being answered via a divert during office hours 6 days a week. Calls have been noticeably busier since 29th March with over 50 in one day.
- Weekly Place Agency Project Group meetings were attended by both the Tourism Manager and the Tourism Marketing Officer
- 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.

Tic Tuks

Given the restrictions of the VIC having only one door and being narrow, we are hopeful that the Tic Tuks will be delivered in early May and will allow us to work in the open air.

Rear



Side



Front



Rear



Side



Front



Here are are mock-ups of them. We shall apply to the Avon & Somerset Constabulary for Pedlars Certificates so that we have the option to sell souvenirs.

We have an agreement with NSC to be able to park near the pier and another with the BID to use their spot outside Costa Coffee on the High Street.

The manufacturers in India are super-excited about the project and are planning a big social media campaign.

4.2 – Reopening VIC

- WSS have been contacted to organise a deep clean prior to re-occupation of the current premises.
- There has been significant weathering damage to the internal window casements which has been reported to NSC.
- We would like to commence recruitment for the seasonal staff with urgency, so that we have sufficient staff immediately that the Tic Tuks are delivered.
- It is envisaged that the mobile Tic Tuks will be in operation in advance of opening the VIC in the Tropicana so that we can deliver our services as soon as possible.
- Archant have confirmed that Explore Magazine will be published on 13th May 2021 to include a pull-out map in the centre pages, removing the need for us to source a new map.
- In anticipation of our reopening and the return of visitors, the Tourism Manager was approached for comment by the following media outlets:

BBC Points West, ITV West Country, Heart Radio Bristol,

BBC West Midlands News, BBC Radio Bristol and Heart Radio Birmingham



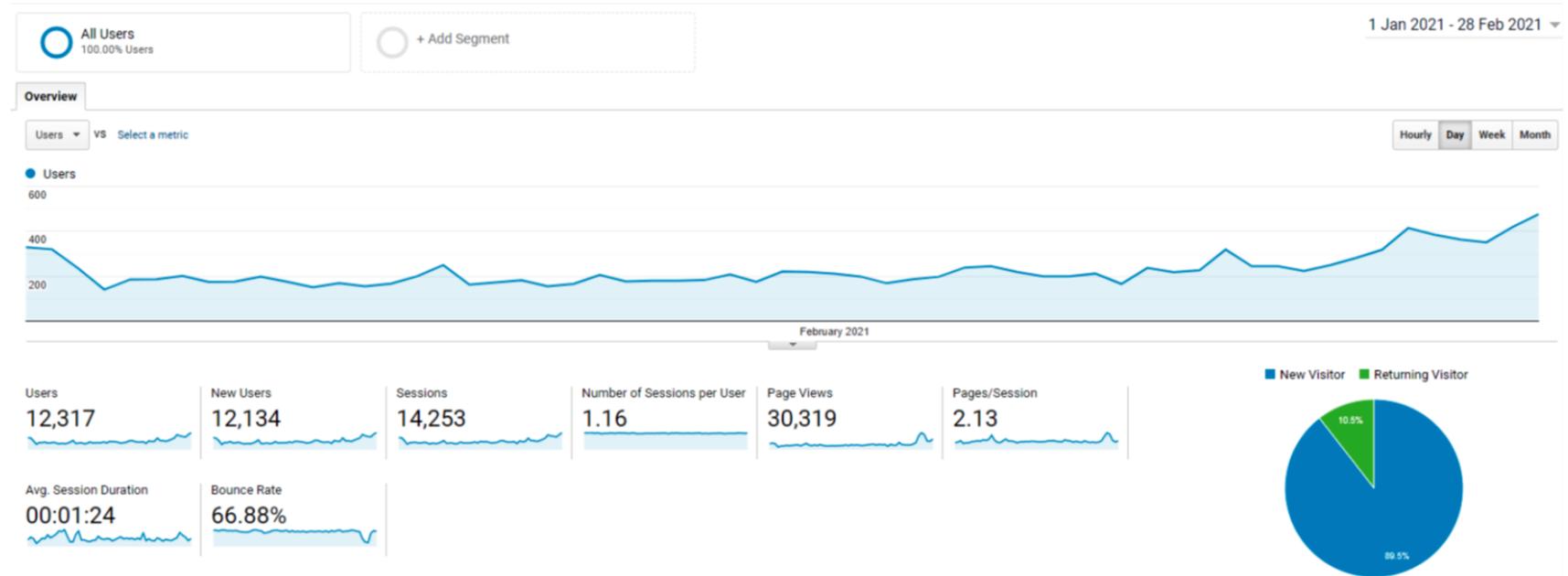
31/3/21 - 07:00 clip Heart
B'ham



31/3/21 - 08:00 clip Heart
B'ham

Positive News going forward

- The Commodore Hotel in Sand Bay is under new ownership and currently being refurbished to include bicycle hire and a dog grooming parlour. Re-named South Sands.
- A meeting with Bespoke Hotels to discuss their plans for the Grand Atlantic is scheduled for 7th April and the Tourism Manager will update the committee verbally.
- One of our guest house partners has reported that they are very happy with forward bookings, taking big volumes of summer bookings that are 5 – 7 night stays.
- One of our self-catering partners has reported that they are now fully booked until September and taking bookings for 2022.
- The Sea Shanty Festival for August will include 60 bands (320 performers) between the Tropicana and Marine Lake with bars, pubs and venues throughout the town centre.
- We have calculated that there are over 1,000 hotel/accommodation beds in the town. Using a mean average of £70 a night and calculating at only 50% occupancy, this equates to almost £13 million in revenue.



4.3 – Social Media & Website

This graphic taken from Google Analytics shows the total visitors to the Visit Weston website during January and February.

- Given the announcement of a third national lockdown on 4th January, unsurprisingly, the number of visitors to the site decreased since the last reporting period.
- The site received an average of 208 visitors per day, viewing a total of 30,319 pages of the site.
- 98% of the visitors were new to the site

4.3 Social Media & Website cont.

The Top 25 most-visited pages during Jan/Feb, are listed here:

- **Outdoor pursuits** once again feature heavily in users' interest, eg. Walking, Brean Down, Crook Peak and Weston Woods.
- Interest into the **annual events** remains high, with Carnival, Beach Race and Air Festival pages viewed several hundreds of times each.
- **Accommodation** pages featured unusually highly, even compared with pre-Covid data. The site saw spikes in visitors to these pages in the days following 22nd February, when the Prime Minister announced the 'Road Map' to restriction removals.
- **Famous People** is a new entry into the Top 10. With vast numbers of students 'home-schooling', this is may have been a research or study project; owing to a large upswing in traffic seen on 3rd February from the WSM area.

1.	/		4,495 (14.83%)
2.	/things-to-do		1,110 (3.66%)
3.	/things-to-do/attractions		966 (3.19%)
4.	/accommodation	←	645 (2.13%)
5.	/things-to-do/weston-super-mare-beach-p1548913		541 (1.78%)
6.	/visitor-info/famous-people	←	481 (1.59%)
7.	/accommodation/caravans-and-holiday-parks	←	479 (1.58%)
8.	/things-to-do/crook-peak-walk-p1811443	←	388 (1.28%)
9.	/things-to-do/outdoors/walking	←	377 (1.24%)
10.	/visitor-info/travel-information/car-parking-and-car-parks		374 (1.23%)
11.	/things-to-do/weston-woods-p1556893	←	373 (1.23%)
12.	/whats-on/rhl-beach-race-2021-p1548693	←	357 (1.18%)
13.	/things-to-do/sand-bay-beach-p1555863		356 (1.17%)
14.	/accommodation/self-catering	←	348 (1.15%)
15.	/whats-on/events-in-weston-super-mare		329 (1.09%)
16.	/shopping/sovereign-shopping-centre-p1540283		310 (1.02%)
17.	/whats-on		301 (0.99%)
18.	/shopping		269 (0.89%)
19.	/whats-on/weston-air-festival-and-armed-forces-2021-p2310293	←	268 (0.88%)
20.	/whats-on/weston-super-mare-carnival-2021-p1876623	←	252 (0.83%)
21.	/food-and-drink/searchresults?sr=1		238 (0.78%)
22.	/things-to-do/outdoors/brean-down-way	←	231 (0.76%)
23.	/visitor-info/dog-friendly		221 (0.73%)
24.	/things-to-do/brean-down-walk-p1777383	←	209 (0.69%)
25.	/food-and-drink		204 (0.67%)

4.3 Social Media & Website continued

1. Bristol	1,846 (14.60%)
2. London	1,484 (11.73%)
3. (not set)	1,238 (9.79%)
4. Weston-super-Mare	888 (7.02%)
5. Birmingham	419 (3.31%)
6. Clevedon	263 (2.08%)
7. Taunton	240 (1.90%)
8. Bridgwater	211 (1.67%)
9. Bath	135 (1.07%)
10. Cardiff	124 (0.98%)
11. Chicago	105 (0.83%)
12. Manchester	87 (0.69%)
13. Coventry	80 (0.63%)
14. Cheltenham	78 (0.62%)
15. Sheffield	75 (0.59%)
16. Nottingham	73 (0.58%)
17. Glastonbury	70 (0.55%)
18. Leeds	67 (0.53%)
19. Exeter	65 (0.51%)
20. Walsall	62 (0.49%)
21. Glasgow	62 (0.49%)
22. Liverpool	61 (0.48%)
23. Reading	57 (0.45%)
24. Newport	56 (0.44%)
25. Yeovil	55 (0.43%)

The final Google data set from the Visit Weston website shows the Top 25 locations of site users throughout January and February.

I have highlighted the areas into categories to illustrate the continued trend in traffic from our target markets. This helps to determine the most effective locations for placement of Destination Marketing campaigns and other advertising.

South West England
Midlands
South Wales
North West England

As ever, 'London' and 'Not Set' are anomalies in data-gathering by Google, but interesting to see Glasgow and Reading at numbers 21 and 23 respectively, which are new additions to our regular site-user demographic.

The continuation of the 'Stay Local' advice, validates any decision we make to concentrate promotion of the town in close-by locations near to – and including, Weston-super-Mare.

It is hoped the launch of the Tic-Tuks will generate a significant amount of local interest as well as in-resort visitors to the seafront.

4.3 Social Media & Website

Visit Weston's presence on the major social media platforms continues to grow, with a further **279 new followers** (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) electing to subscribe to our content during January and February.

Our Facebook content reached **56,957 profiles** and Instagram content reaching **15,877 profiles**.

Twitter continues to yield lacklustre engagement- with many other organisations in Weston (including NSC) reporting that Twitter is not a successful platform for digital marketing in Weston-super-Mare, coupled with the understanding that most Destination Marketing Organisations also find engagement difficult over Twitter, it may warrant consideration to 'mothball' the account, and focus our energies on the two more prominent sites.

A Visit Weston TikTok account is currently being looked into, potentially to launch alongside the TicTuk vehicles' unveiling later this spring.

It has been challenging to create regular new content for the accounts, given the lack of news/updates to report, or services to promote. We have offered our Social Media services to all partners to boost their own post reach, and wherever that has been requested, we have promptly taken action to assist.



4.4 – Destination Marketing



The TMO and TM have outlined a robust and dynamic strategy for 2021/2022 with a focus on supporting the economic recovery of our tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses. Our destination marketing plan is designed to bring Weston to the forefront against competition from other English resorts.

Further to our report into Destination Marketing at the last Committee meeting in February, changes to our original plans are necessary; the recent announcement of another annual postponement of the 2021 Carnival, mean our hopes of sponsoring the event are no longer possible.

Pear Communications and Visit Weston will continue to work together, we are currently waiting on a delivery to sample the visitor information packs we aim to distribute from the Tic Tuks and the VIC/Water Park. We are also in talks with Archant re: a sponsorship deal for the centrefold map in the 2021 Explore Guide. Consideration has been given to the timing of our campaign launches, following insight received from Pear as to the approach of other DMOs. They reported that no other coastal destinations are advertising with C-19 caveats, instead forging ahead with full-strength marketing strategies. It is likely we shall adopt the same approach.