

tourism partnership north wales **annual review** 2009-10 executive summary



what to do



short breaks

www.breaksnorthwales.co.uk



adventure

www.adventure-northwales.com



golf

www.golf-northwales.co.uk



walking

www.walkingnorthwales.co.uk



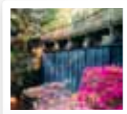
moviemap

www.moviemapnorthwales.co.uk



events

www.eventsnorthwales.co.uk



gardens

www.gardensnorthwales.co.uk



attractions

www.attractionsnorthwales.co.uk



walled towns

www.walledtowns.co.uk



giants

www.giantsnorthwales.co.uk



ambassadors

www.ambassadorsnorthwales.co.uk

foreword



It was an unusual year in many ways, one defined by the challenges and opportunities presented by the prevailing economic climate.

The word staycation has now been accepted as part of the tourism lexicon and given added legitimacy by its inclusion in the Oxford English Dictionary.

The recession made people revisit their spending plans and many opted to holiday at home instead of jetting off abroad.

By the turn of the year, there were rays of optimism starting to show and the holiday park sector in particular enjoyed an excellent recovery.

All of this fed into an upturn in traditional family holidays and short breaks as Tourism Partnership North Wales responded to the changing economic circumstances.

It was tough going in the business

tourism sector but even so there was still positive progress while the strength and variety of the offer mean we have plenty of reasons to be optimistic for the future.

Looking forward, we are aware of our responsibilities. The regional economy is heavily and increasingly dependent on tourism – and we are determined to play our part in creating a new path to prosperity.

We can help lead North Wales out of the recession and we started 2010 in the way we mean to go on when our blueprint for the future was unveiled at Galeri, in Caernarfon, by the Minister for Heritage, Alun Ffred Jones AM.

The event attracted a great deal of publicity in newspapers and on radio and television.

The Tourism Strategy North Wales 2010-2015 aims to propel the region into the UK's top five destinations for

visitors and to increase the annual revenue generated by the visitor economy to £2 billion a year.

We should not and will not underestimate the challenge of achieving our deliberately ambitious goals.

Let us be under no illusions, the competition remains fierce. There are many other places that our customers could choose to go, with more than 2,000 alternative destinations within two hours of our airports in Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham.

So, at a time of tightening budgets, it is more important than ever that we forge even stronger working links with our partners in the trade and the public sector.

We are all having to do more with less money so we have to be smarter and more collaborative in the way we

operate so that we make our combined financial resources go further, squeezing maximum value out of every pound that we spend.

North Wales has a lot going for it as a visitor destination. We have the scenery and natural assets that can take your breath away.

Transport links by road and rail are now top notch so we are only two hours away for a quarter of the UK's population, the people who live in the conurbations of the North West and the Midlands.

You don't have to queue in an airport here, we are not at the mercy of external forces like ash clouds – we're accessible and affordable.

Increasingly, the consumer is also looking for value for money while their expectations in terms of quality are becoming higher all the time – and rightly so.

The challenge for us is to meet and surpass their expectations.



Neil Rowlands
Chairman

Dewi Davies
Regional Strategy Director

Front Page and above: Views from the summit of Snowdon.

executive summary

The major event of the year was the unveiling of our new strategy.

It covers the period until 2015 and includes three-year action plans that will be updated for North East Wales and North West Wales.

Key targets include becoming a top five UK destination for visitors and investing in the excellence of the tourism offer, including the burgeoning outdoor activities sector.

Our ambition is to increase the income from visitors to £2 billion a year.

It is designed to create a wow factor for visitors by providing a warm welcome, good service in spick and span surroundings so that they enjoy an outstanding experience

At the same time, we have to make the best and most efficient use of our marketing budget through more collaboration with our partners.

We made great strides in this respect. Working on a reduced budget, our campaigns generated an additional £15 million in spending and significantly the return on investment was higher than in previous years. For every £1 we spent, we created £26.

The migration of our marketing campaigns to the Internet continued, both as a way of embracing the reality of the here and now as well as being an even more cost effective way of selling North Wales as a visitor destination.

Even before the credit crunch, short breaks were developing into an increasingly important dimension of the visitor economy and they now account for a major part of the market.

Meanwhile, virtual visitors turned into real ones thanks to the success of an online marketing campaign promoting the region's attractions.

Around 170,000 "unique visitors" logged on to the attractions website pumping £300,000 into the regional economy – all for an investment of £15,000.

The quality, range and affordability

of attractions on offer meant we attracted a large number of families with young children.

With the Ryder Cup Wales 2010 in the offing, our Golf North Wales campaign was in full swing and the new online booking service for golfers has now led to an additional £500,000 in green fees for the clubs concerned.

There was also big news in relation to our campaign to celebrate the region's giants, whether they are giants of culture, history and nature or man-made giants like the award-winning Hafod Eryri at the summit of Snowdon and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal. The giants were expected to create £1 million in extra spending.

At the other end of the tourism spectrum, there was a big push to attract more conferences, meetings and exhibitions to the region,

The business tourism market is worth more than £13 million a year and it is hoped to generate an increase of up to 20 per cent in revenue.

A survey of visitors commissioned by Visit Wales and part funded by Tourism Partnership and the region's local authorities showed we were on the right track.

Ninety nine per cent of visitors were positive about North Wales, with 56 per cent saying it was excellent and that 90 per cent believing the people here are friendly

Meanwhile, 87 per cent of visitors appreciated the warm welcome they received and 93 per cent were planning a return visit to North Wales while 96 per cent of them were likely to recommend North Wales to friends and family.

We are using modern methods to play to our traditional strengths.



Above: Celebration of World Heritage status for Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

Far left: Tourism Strategy launch at the Galeri, Caernarfon.

Left: Mountain biking at Coed Llandegla.

Bottom left: Minister for Heritage Alun Ffred Jones with Dewi Davies and Neil Rowlands at the Strategy Launch.

business plan

distinctive branding

Among our priorities during the year was to continue to develop and communicate our distinctive brand.

Our unique sense of place was the golden thread running through our campaigns, all of which complied with Brand North Wales.

The focus was to present potential visitors with an attractive and consistent image of the region, one that sets us apart from other visitor destinations.

The brand proposition we are promoting is based on the outdoor playground, The Great Outdoors.

The Short Breaks North Wales campaign continued to be an important element of our overall strategic approach

The website has an online booking facility for over a 100 businesses. During the year it generated 70,000 unique visits, with 10 per cent of them going on to enquire about making a booking.

The Giants North Wales campaign was re-focused to concentrate on eight iconic big tickets, including Caernarfon Castle, Portmeirion, Snowdon, the National Slate Museum, Menai Suspension Bridge, St Asaph Cathedral and Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal.

The group travel market was specifically targeted and we have developed a special offer with Arriva Trains Wales so that members of their Club 55 receive a discount when visiting attractions.

Meanwhile, the number of visitors taking adventure holidays here has continued to grow despite the effects of a difficult economic outlook and a global recession.

Plans to build on that success were outlined at the annual forum organised by Tourism Partnership for adventure stakeholders from across North Wales.

Walking North Wales is another campaign that plays to our strengths – and it's a market with huge potential. Walking is three times as popular as swimming, its nearest competitor among physical activities, with 44.5 per cent of adults regularly enjoying a walk of more than two miles.

New and exciting walking festivals

were organised and we introduced new eTrails where all a walker needs is a mobile phone to access information on landmarks and geographical features as they progress along a particular walk.

On the new technology front, we exploited the opportunities offered by new media and made progress via Facebook and Twitter where people are now talking about North Wales as a mecca for walkers.

We are pleased to report that Prestatyn, Rhuddlan, Pentrefoelas, Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr are now all signed up to the Walkers are Welcome scheme.

We have also been harvesting visitors thanks to the popularity of another pastime, gardening.

It is estimated there are 20 million gardeners in the UK so Gardens North Wales is a campaign where we have been fostering growth.

Although it's been tough going over the past 12 months, the business tourism market is a potentially lucrative one and we have attended national events to promote North Wales as a first class destination for conferences, meetings and exhibitions.

We have also supported efforts to attract more cruise ships to berth at Holyhead and there was further growth during the year with a total of 13 vessels booked in.

In particular, we provided support to ensure a positive experience for passengers while they were ashore with trips to Anglesey, Snowdonia and the Conwy coastal area.

In relation to the overseas market, we worked closely with Gwynedd Council, as the lead agency, to ensure continuous improvement to the Tramor campaign.

higher quality

First impressions count, so our aim has been to make North Wales an even more attractive destination and create the best possible experience for visitors.

As a result, we have invested a great deal of time and effort developing a destination management plan to roll out across all the six local authorities in North Wales.

Strengthening our unique sense of place was a priority as a means of maximising the distinctiveness of our offer while we worked to guide local authorities as they drew up their Local Development Plans so that they were conducive to the growth of the visitor economy.

There is room for improvement in a number of our towns because there has been a decline in their appearance because of the economic situation.

As part of the process we undertook learning trips to see best practice in action. One of the most notable experiences was the visit to Inverness, Speyside and Fort William in Scotland to study the secrets of their success.

Investing in the excellence of our product is important because of the competition from UK destinations and overseas destinations who are investing heavily in their own product.

We therefore continued to encourage and support the improvement and upgrading of all types of accommodation and attractions through promotion of the quality assurance schemes, business support and mentoring, recognition of good practice and financial assistance.

We coordinated our product development in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's Spatial Plans, working with the North Wales Economic Forum and the local authorities.

The work included identifying priorities for EU Convergence Programme funding, the Rural Development Partnerships' Axis 3 and Axis 4 funding and dovetailed with our new, five-year strategy

As the year wore on, excitement continued to mount as golfers looked forward to the Ryder Cup Wales 2010.

Here in North Wales we have been riding the crest of the Ryder Cup Wales 2010 wave to attract more golfers to the region.

There has been a massive increase in online bookings which have generated nearly £500,000 in green fees over the past three years.

Central to the success of the campaign is the www.golf-northwales.co.uk website built and is operated by top



Former Marine Commando Sean Taylor at Tree Tops, a high ropes adventure course near Betws-y-Coed.

online tee time company, BRS.

Customers can not only book online but also see images of the different golf courses as well as details about special offers and nearby accommodation

Tourism Partnership also supported a one stop shop golf booking facility in Colwyn Bay which generated £150,000 of business and we facilitated the sale of nearly 500 passes for golf courses on Anglesey.

Meanwhile, Adventure North Wales has continued to develop as a vehicle to promote the region as a top destination for outdoor pursuits.

As part of the campaign, we set a challenge to see if anybody could take part in 15 adventure activities in one day and this achieved a great deal of publicity online and via newspapers and magazines.

easier access

We are committed to improving the accessibility of Wales as a visitor destination.

Web-based marketing and social media are playing an increasingly important role in helping us to communicate more effectively with customers.

Tourism Partnership continued to support Web4-U, a free of charge service for tourism related businesses in North Wales.

It provides a template for newsletters which can be tailored to suit the needs of the individual participants as a way of creating electronic marketing material. There are now 1,200 business signed up to the scheme.

We also funded a traditional central reservation facility in Colwyn Bay that generated approximately 5,000 bed nights, equating to nearly £500,000-worth of spending by visitors.

Events North Wales continued to be an important vehicle to provide information on over 314 events that happen in North Wales each year and we are grateful for the work done by our partners at North Wales Tourism who have been diligent in supplying the necessary information.

The data are fed automatically to the relevant Visit Britain pages, giving us a global reach in terms of communicating with potential customers.

The Attractions North Wales website, which has 188 attractions listed, has been particularly effective, and recorded 170,000 unique visits.

better skills

Improving the skills of people involved in the tourism industry was again a strategic priority.

We were sad to see our relationship with Tourism Training for Wales come to an end but we redoubled our efforts in other directions.

Tourism Partnership worked closely with Further Education colleges, with the outdoor sector, with the holiday park sector, the hospitality sector in order to make sure that young people are being recruited.

The aim is to improve their skills so that they are being given an opportunity to embark on a career that will give them a fulfilling life.

In parts of North Wales, we have seen a haemorrhage of young people going to live and work outside the area. This is something we need to counteract because it weakens our offer.

As part of our support for the attractions sector, we organised a series of learning journeys. Among them was a visit to the North East of England to see how attractions there have been investing and making themselves more competitive.

stronger partnerships

Building stronger partnerships was a key priority. Given the current economic climate, it is more important than ever that we work closely with our partners in the trade and in the public sector.

As a result, we have provided around £40,000 in funding to each of the five Marketing Area Partnerships in North Wales.

In the isle of Anglesey, we supported the sourcing of new imagery and the creation of a one-stop website, along with public relations campaign to place stories in the North West, the Midlands and further afield to tell the world about the gems the island has to offer.

In Snowdonia Mountains and Coast, we supported a direct marketing campaign with Visit Wales and Gwynedd Council. We also persuaded the Llŷn Tourism Partnership to

become an umbrella organisation for a number of smaller tourism organisations. During the year, we were particularly pleased that Heritage Minister Alun Ffred Jones AM officially opened the Abersoch Tourist Information Centre.

We also supported a joint marketing campaign in Coastal Resorts West to promote some of their key events, like Gwledd Conwy Feast and the Celtic Winter Fayre. At the same time, we invested in improving the quality of Llandudno attractions with video

footage being developed of their offer.

In neighbouring Coastal Resorts East, the project ran a bit more slowly but we supported a group travel visit in order that journalists, editors and group organisers were able to gain a better knowledge of the fantastic offer there we also allocated resources for a major PR campaign for the resorts.

To the east, in the North Wales Borderlands, we provided funding for a new attractions leaflets and we helped to develop an upgraded photographic library of the golf courses.



Trade Directors

Neil Rowlands
Darryl Shaw
James P S Hewett
Nia Rhys Jones
Phil Nelson
Anwen Jones
Andrew Baker

Chairperson
Vice Chairperson
Snowdonia Mountains & Coast
North Wales Coastal Region
General
General
General

Trade Advisors to the Board

John Les Tomos

Flintshire Tourism Association

Local Authority Directors

Cllr R H Wyn Williams
Cllr David Thomas
Cllr Bryan Owen
Cllr Goronwy Edwards
Cllr Gail Hall
Cllr Tony Sharps
Dr Dawn Roberts

Gwynedd Council / Vice Chairperson
Denbighshire County Council
Isle of Anglesey County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Snowdonia National Park Authority
Flintshire County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council

The full version of the Annual Review 2009-10 is available at www.tpnw.org