

SWANSEA BAY BLUE FLAG SYMPOSIUM

9.30am–12.30pm, Monday 30th March 2009
George Hall, The Guildhall, Swansea

This event was organised by Swansea Environmental Forum and was attended by over 30 individuals from a wide variety of organisations including statutory bodies, voluntary organisations, educational establishments and other stakeholders.

Following presentations from Huw Morgan (City and County of Swansea, Pollution Control) and Hamish Osborne (Environment Agency Wales) on water quality in Swansea Bay, Tegryn Jones (Keep Wales Tidy) on the Blue Flag Programme, and Denise Fletcher (Bridgend County Borough Council) on her experience with the Blue Flag Programme, the attendees were engaged in group discussions.

NOTES FROM GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Discussion Areas

1. issues, projects and proposals that need to be considered
2. opportunities for support or barriers to progress that exist
3. additional organisations or stakeholders to get involved
4. next steps or priority actions that need to be taken

GROUP 1

Issues

Marketing & signage – work with health

'Waterfront City' – what does this mean? Could mean more concrete!

City centre Strategy & Swansea Bay Strategy – link city centre to sea – currently gap

Health – positive health agenda to be integrated – health messages – activity

'Health Asset' more wellbeing reps – need stakeholders together

Need to maintain cycle route & path along Bay

Next step – set up – SEF ask for people to sit on this – involve councillors

Work on issues – balancing – getting over reasons for doing nothing

Site choice – Blue Flag – County Hall? / seaside – others – Mumbles? Green Coast at Sketty

Some areas have more sensitivity e.g. overwintering birds / dog byelaws

Beach cleaning – solved – was mechanical – now sensitive areas manual

Would people swim at County Hall? More likely Blackpill but historically did

In last 5 years people using beach

Atmosphere at beach – improved by events e.g. Sculpture by the Sea Festival

Central – transport sustainability – buses / Bay train / bikes

Facilities – people work in area – lunchtimes – potential organised events

Water quality – cleaning water – Can this affect filtrate feeders - mussels, etc.?



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Background levels probably always there
Mortality rates?
Oystermouth – pre-industrial revolution in area – very high quality water
Swansea Bay is a sea fishery
Some potential conflicts
Re-introduce oysters – if natural population build up – would need a feasibility study
Affect on fisheries, oysters, mussels – dredging or not?
Fisheries can show economic value of Bay
Promenade – improvements, already well used, many opportunities, ‘Disney-style’ transport
– don’t promote history & lineage
Needs more atmosphere – links with sailing
‘Bathing machines’ on beach – romance – no infrastructure needed – commission ‘historic’
romance e.g. coastal boats
Economics – make Bay one of central drivers
Manchester/Birmingham canals – how much more we have
Marine industries – very small profit margins, but do not want to lose, build into development
Even heading towards ‘Blue Flag’ - huge improvement – getting us together

GROUP 2

Issues, projects, proposals

Need to be clear exactly what needs to be done to improve water quality, is it possible and how much it will cost?
What is the likely impact of climate change on future sea water quality?
Need for increased awareness of links between pollution and what people flush down the toilet

Opportunities and barriers

Need combined funding
Bids for Convergence
Need for more research into best solutions and costs – feasibility study
Planning for the future – holistic approach – planning environmental management
Start with a pilot area
Doing nothing is not an option

GROUP 3

Issues

Timing – months
Seaside Award / Green Coast?
Is it achievable?
What part of Swansea Bay?
Habitats need to be considered e.g. SSSI
Honeycomb worm reef
Transport infrastructure – access and car parking



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Infrastructure there for physical resources but no staff
Could use the good practice
Is it better to have it or lose it? Can Swansea afford not to have it?
Better information for uses
Energy lagoon
Conflict with Blackpill – zones

Opportunities

Accolade / attractant
Reduce pressure on Gower
Marine Bill
Water sports
Metro-bus
Everybody working together
Funding: LAQ Centre of Excellence – Convergence, Visit Wales
Must consider wildlife
Yachts, dinghies, fishing
Water Framework Directive: EA funds
Splash – access to water bodies
Landtrain
Attract private investment
Swansea Bay Strategy – does it need to be more realistic?
Barriers – money, lack of infrastructure, water quality
Swansea Point – test water there
Sand Dunes
Environment Centre
Swansea City Centre – strategic regeneration area

Additional organisations

WAG, DEIN, WTB, Marina/SA1, Yacht clubs, Other NGO's-MCS, SAS, GOS
Bait diggers, dog walkers, wind-surfers, metal-detectors, anglers
Local traders, round tables, Chamber of Commerce, City Centre Partnership, museums, hoteliers, councillors, EcoSchools-SEEF, LBAP

Next Steps

What is needed to get the required water standard – cost, etc.
Feasibility study

Key Points

1. Funding for feasibility study for Blue Flag with stepping stones / intervening awards (Hamish to ask EA to contribute)
2. Set up steering group – remit, joined-up thinking, communication



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GROUP 4

Issues

1. Water quality – medium term - misconnections, continuing problems with ‘mistakes’, changes in water movement depending on high/low tide
2. Infrastructure – short to medium term
3. Seaside Award – short term
4. Blackpill v’s County Hall (easiest place to consider) – conflicts, SSSI’s, wildlife health
5. Would people go to ‘Spontex’ site?
6. Conflicts of users – city beach vs Gower beaches – dogs – zoning – activity/sports
7. Overzealous beach cleaning harmful to natural habitats

(group 5 split between other groups)

GROUP 6

Issues, projects, proposals

Water quality – further studies towards accurate prediction model, misconnections work
Public protection / perception

Opportunities

Seaside Award? instead of Blue Flag?
Funding – Convergence, WISE, etc.

Additional stakeholders

Surfing organisations
Gower Explorer (recreational activities)
Kite surfing, etc.

Next Steps

Decide whether to go for Blue Flag or not

SUMMARY POINTS

1. Blue Flag must be viewed as LONG TERM
2. Should try and achieve ‘Seaside Award’ in the MEDIUM TERM
3. SHORT TERM we need to determine
 - a. where to sample
 - b. research benefits
 - c. managing conflicts – ‘user v ecology’

It was agreed that a task group be formed to progress these points and report back to the wider group later in the year.



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