

End of Programme Evaluation for the Heritage Tourism Programme

Executive Summary

1. Background

- 1.1 Old Bell 3 Ltd., in conjunction with Cardiff University, was commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake a final evaluation of the Heritage Tourism Project (HTP).
- 1.2 The aim of this evaluation was to assess the success of the HTP in meeting its targets, its effectiveness in terms of how it was delivered and the difference the investment made to organisations and visitors.

2. Programme overview

- 2.1 Funded via the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the HTP aimed to maximise the economic value of heritage in Wales by increasing the number, length and value of visits to Wales. The project also aimed to open Wales' heritage to a wider audience by making it more enjoyable both for visitors and for people who live in Wales.
- 2.2 The project was led by Cadw with an overall fund of £19 million, £9 million of which was made available by the Welsh Government (via Cadw and the Targeted Match Fund), £8.5 million of ERDF under Priority 4, Theme 3 Environment for Growth (E4G) of the 2007-2013 Convergence Programme and the remaining funding from other delivery partners. The project commenced in 2009 and was initially expected to run until December 2014. An extension was approved and the project ended on June 30 2015. In all, the HTP funded 25 initiatives, 11 of which were delivered by Cadw and the remaining 14 by external partners. Over the course of its delivery the HTP invested £18.132 million of its allocated budget.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 The evaluation report is based on a work programme undertaken between July and September 2015 which involved:
 - attending a planning meeting with the Evaluation Steering Group to agree the research methodology for evaluation
 - reviewing documents relating to the design and delivery of the HTP, including the project's business plan, progress reports and project monitoring and output data, with a view to assessing the extent to which project targets were met

- undertaking a desk based review of wider policy literature relating to heritage tourism in Wales
- preparing semi-structured discussion guides for use with Cadw staff, external stakeholders and representatives from HTP funded initiatives
- interviewing representatives involved with 14 HTP funded initiatives led by external organisations, including staff from across six local authorities and the Welsh Government
- interviewing ten Cadw staff as well as six Cadw Custodians based at HTP funded sites
- interviewing Visit Wales and WEFO officials
- analysing project outputs and achievements to undertake a final assessment of the economic impact of the HTP.

4. Key findings

- 4.1 The HTP was conceived and developed against a supportive Welsh policy context and was well rooted in, and aligned with, key Welsh Government policies at the time. During the course of the project's implementation, the Welsh policy context remained supportive of the underlying project objectives. Strategic documents which were published during the project's lifespan provided an additional level of detail which helped inform its delivery, in-line with its original objectives.
- 4.2 The HTP made very good progress against its WEFO funded targets having achieved two of its three key performance indicators. It developed the natural and/or historic environment at 25 sites, generated 809,262 visitor visits and created 5.4 new full time jobs (against a target of 8.8). Our fieldwork found that the project had under-reported its achievements against two of its funded targets, as visitor data was only reported for 13 of the 25 funded initiatives supported and that the creation of jobs was only considered for one funded initiative (in addition to the core project management team employed by Cadw). Indeed our own research showed that the HTP had helped create new jobs across at least five of the funded initiatives and these jobs had not been reported at project outputs to WEFO.
- 4.3 The lack of robust monitoring data for externally funded initiatives, together with a lack of original targets made available to the evaluation team for Cadw led initiatives, made it very difficult to come to a view about the success of otherwise of individual initiatives. Where such data was available the review found that none of the individual initiatives had achieved their respective visitor targets by December 2014.
- 4.4 The main factors which accounted for the under-performance of individual initiatives were delays in commencing project delivery (which impacted upon initiatives' ability to meet their targets within the original timescales set) and the lack of post-investment visitor numbers available, given that several initiatives had only completed work during 2015.
- 4.5 We concluded that the HTP:
- was successful in meeting its twin aims of improving Welsh heritage destinations and producing visitor focused heritage interpretation at these sites
 - adopted an inclusive approach to funding a wide range of initiatives which were in keeping with the overall aims and objectives of the project
 - transformed the quality and attractiveness of some key heritage sites
 - proved effective in enabling the development of successful partnerships to deliver individual initiatives

- performed very well against its cross cutting themes aims and objectives and we encountered excellent examples of how initiatives had fully embraced both environmental sustainability and equal opportunities objectives
- resulted in a marked difference to visitor experiences at the supported sites as well as a modest difference to visitor numbers at least 11 of the sites supported.

4.6 In terms of impact, the evaluation reported that the HTP investment could be connected with impacts of around £19 million of GVA per annum and that this supported employment of around 1,000 full time employees. The additional tourist visits associated with externally funded initiatives could be expected to lead to an increase in Welsh GVA of £0.5 million leading to 27.5 FTE job opportunities (if we are to assume that 25% of visits were genuinely additional ones) or an increase in Welsh GVA of £1.01 million leading to 55 FTE job opportunities (if we are to assume that 50% of visits were additional).

4.7 In terms of key lessons we further conclude that the HTP:

- was overly-ambitious in terms of the number of initiatives funded when considering the staffing resources available at the project level
- at an individual level, initiatives had under-estimated the resources required to manage their own developments, particularly in terms of meeting the demands placed upon them to comply with EU financial and reporting monitoring requirements
- missed opportunities to strengthen the linkages across the 25 funded initiatives involved in the project and that greater support could have been made available to externally led initiatives.

4.8 We make nine recommendations for the delivery of any future similar project, namely that:

- appropriate mechanisms be put in place to capture and report upon all outputs achieved across funded initiatives, so as to ensure a future similar project does not under-report against its performance indicators to WEFO
- that greater consideration be given to a more consistent method of defining, monitoring and reporting project outcomes from the outset. This would include allocating an appropriate budget for undertaking baseline, mid-term and final reviews.
- any future project invests in developments which are more start-ready than was the case with HTP, to ensure that delays are minimised
- the project sponsor encourages greater contact and collaboration between funded initiatives so as to achieve greater spatial, thematic and chronological links
- any funding opportunities be adequately promoted (drawing on the good practice demonstrated within the HTP) and where possible, that issues relating to securing match funding be addressed
- it funds a smaller number of more strategic initiatives and that the selection of those initiatives be determined by considering the benefits which are likely to be achieved against a small number of economic impact criteria
- the lead partner responsible for any future similar project resources an adequate core team to manage the project

- formal procurement guidance be developed and agreed at the outset between WEFO, lead sponsor and any other partner organisations involved in the delivery of a future similar project
- recommend that a future similar project develops and adopts a clear communication and promotional strategy which sets out the expectations for the lead body as well as each individual initiative, and that these requirements are set out in any delivery funding agreement.

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Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



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Available at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-heritage-tourism-project/?lang=en>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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