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Evaluation of the tourism attractor destinations: interim report

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Evaluation of the Tourism Attractor Destinations: Interim Report

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

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
CCTs	Cross-cutting themes
E4G	Environment for Growth was a programme of 6 tourism projects supported through the 2007-13 round of European Funding
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
FTE	Full-time equivalent
Joint beneficiaries / JBs	Lead organisations in each of the 13 projects in receipt of funding via Visit Wales
Lead beneficiary	This refers to Visit Wales in its role in managing the delivery of the TAD operation
Managing Authority	WEFO is the Managing Authority for European Structural Funds in Wales
Operation	The Tourism Attractor Destinations or TAD operation. The abbreviated collective term for the 13 funded projects.
Partner beneficiaries	Organisations delivering stand-alone elements of projects or supporting project delivery. Receive funding via joint beneficiaries.
Programme	The West Wales and the Valleys European Regional Development Fund Programme through which the Tourism Attractor Destinations operation is funded.
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
SME	Small and medium sized enterprise
TAD (projects)	Tourism Attractor Destinations (projects)
TAIS	Tourism Amenity Investment Support
TISS	Tourism Investment Support Scheme
VW	Visit Wales
WEFO	Wales European Funding Office

1. Introduction

1.1 Arad Research was commissioned by the Welsh Government in August 2018 to carry out an evaluation of the Tourism Attractor Destinations (TAD) operation. TAD is funded by the Wales European Funding Organisation (WEFO) and forms part of the 2014-2020 West Wales and the Valleys ERDF Programme. It aims to deliver a £62 million iconic tourism investment programme supporting 13 strategic, regionally prioritised tourism projects that will raise the quality and perception of destinations in Wales. The operation is delivered by Visit Wales as the lead beneficiary and 13 joint beneficiaries for the selected destinations. Visit Wales is a division within the Welsh Government’s Culture, Sport and Tourism department.

1.2 The evaluation draws on a broad and inclusive research process that involves engaging with Visit Wales, joint beneficiaries and partner organisations to collect and analyse primary and secondary data. The study is taking place between September 2018 and March 2021, running in parallel with the delivery of the TAD projects. Indeed, one feature of the evaluation is that it is a reflection of projects at different stages of maturity and development, due to the phased roll-out of the operation. Nonetheless, the evaluation team is confident that over the two and a half years of the evaluation the study will build a robust evidence base that enables an assessment of the operation’s delivery, outcomes and wider learning points to inform future strategic priorities to support the visitor economy.

1.3 The key phases of the evaluation are as follows:

- **Inception and scoping phase (September 2018-January 2019)**
- **Interim evaluation phase (January 2019-September 2019)**
- Break in evaluation activity: (November 2019-June 2020)
- **Final evaluation phase (July 2020–March 2021)**

1.4 The evaluation team has been commissioned to complete two reports: an interim report (this report) in summer 2019 and a final evaluation report to be completed by March 2021. This interim report aims to provide an assessment of progress to date in delivering the operation, based around a series of key evaluation questions (see 1.7). The findings draw on the data and evidence collected between October 2018

and June 2019. The final evaluation report will present the outcomes of the operation, drawing on data and evidence collected from joint beneficiaries and stakeholders during the latter half of 2020.

1.5 In this introductory chapter we set out the following:

- the evaluation aims and objectives, including the scope of this interim report;
- an outline of the evaluation methodology; and
- the content of the following sections of the report.

Evaluation aims and objectives

1.6 The evaluation is a two-and-a-half-year study. The evaluation will assess the success of the operation against its stated outputs and delivery objectives, and measure outcomes and impact at operation level (i.e. TAD), whilst also drawing on individual project-level outcomes. The requirements of the evaluation were defined in the specification, although no specific evaluation questions were identified relating to the interim evaluation report. Table 1.1 summarises the scope of this report. Interim commentary and analysis are possible in respect of many of the evaluation objectives; however there are limitations in being able to draw any firm conclusions at a time when a number of TAD projects are still at relatively early stages of development.

Table 1.1: Scope and coverage of the interim evaluation

Evaluation objective	In scope as part of interim evaluation?
Evaluate the strategic alignment of TAD activity to Welsh Government policies outlined in the business plan, and the Wales ERDF Programme.	Yes, interim analysis (see Chapter 4)
Evaluate the extent to which the operation activity addresses current challenges facing the Wales tourism industry.	Yes, interim analysis (see Chapter 2)
Examine the delivery model for TAD, with particular focus on evaluating the approach of investing in large scale sites.	Yes, interim analysis (see Chapter 4)
Assess the extent to which operation and projects have achieved the delivery commitments outlined in the business plans, and met key performance indicator targets	No, for inclusion in final evaluation report.
Evaluate the extent to which wider impacts of the operation affect the tourism industry in Wales.	Partially. An 'evaluation' not yet possible. Interpretation and initial analysis relating to transformational change.
Examine visitor experience and motivations for visiting Project sites and changes to these factors over time.	No, for inclusion in final evaluation report.
Examine the approach to marketing the operation and Project sites and identify how marketing activity may be improved.	Initial commentary only on planned marketing activity (see Chapter 6).
Provide an assessment of the extent to which the operation has addressed the cross-cutting themes as part of the intervention.	Partially – initial commentary drawing on Project site visits (see Chapter 5).
Examine the extent to which projects have encouraged and delivered initiatives in support of the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy.	Partially – initial commentary drawing on Project site visits (see Chapter 5).

1.7 The questions this interim evaluation report is focused on can be summarised as follows:

- What progress has there been to date in delivering the TAD operation?
- What, if any, gaps are there in the data or intelligence in order to be able to assess the TAD operation against the evaluation objectives set out above?
- Are there any challenges associated with being able to fulfil the evaluation objectives?

- What are the learning points for the current and future tourism-related projects or programmes?

Methodology and evidence base

1.8 The findings presented in this interim report are based on the following elements, completed between October 2018 and June 2019.

Desk research

1.9 The evaluation team reviewed the background documentation relating to the ERDF Programme; the TAD operation and other relevant policy documents.

Documentation reviewed included:

- Tourism Attractor Destinations Business Plan;
- Individual TAD project Business Plans;
- West Wales and the Valleys: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) operational programme 2014 to 2020, Welsh Government;¹
- *Partnership for Growth*, Welsh Government's Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020;²
- Partnership for Growth: Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020: Strategy Progress Review, Welsh Government;³
- Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework, Welsh Government;⁴
- Wales Tourism Performance Reports, Welsh Government;⁵
- Great Britain Tourism Survey: 2017;⁶
- Environment for Growth Monitoring & Evaluation Reports, Welsh Economy Research Unit, Cardiff Business School;⁷

¹ [West Wales and the Valleys ERDF operational programme](#)

² [Partnership for Growth, Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020](#)

³ [Partnership for Growth, Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020: Progress Review](#)

⁴ [Vibrant and Viable Places Framework](#)

⁵ [Wales Tourism Performance](#)

⁶ [Great Britain Tourism Survey 2017](#)

⁷ [E4G Evaluation reports](#)

- Operation monitoring information: quarterly monitoring form and a sample of completed forms; example of cross-cutting theme assessment; output data from completed projects.

1.10 The strategic and policy documentation, which is referenced in the TAD Business Plan, along with statistical releases, provide useful context and reference points for the evaluation. The evaluation team will continue to draw on these sources during later phases of the study, considering the contribution of the operation – when more complete data becomes available - towards wider strategic priorities.

Scoping interviews

1.11 Scoping interviews were carried out with eight Visit Wales and Welsh Government representatives. These interviews provided further insight into the background and strategic context to the operation and helped inform future phases of the evaluation. Initial introductory interviews were completed with representatives of all joint beneficiaries, providing an opportunity to learn about progress to date and facilitators and challenges linked to project delivery.

1.12 The outcomes of these initial phases were presented in an internal Scoping Paper presented to Welsh Government in January 2019.

Interim evaluation fieldwork with joint beneficiaries and strategic stakeholders

1.13 The evaluation team visited 11 out of the 13 TAD sites to speak with project representatives, including project leads, other staff and, in some cases, partner beneficiaries and external organisations with links to the projects. In the case of the two projects which were not visited in person, interviews were conducted with project officers off-site. Interviews were also carried out with Welsh Government representatives and other strategic stakeholders. Five Welsh Government representatives were interviewed. Semi-structured interview guides used as part of this fieldwork are included in Annex A, setting out the themes and discussion points covered.

1.14 Scoping interviews with joint beneficiaries revealed potential challenges and gaps in data associated with the evaluation objective of examining ‘visitor experience and motivations for visiting Project sites’, as set out in Table 1.1. Although some TAD sites had existing data (or preliminary plans) to collect data on visitor perceptions,

we concluded that there was a need to work with partners in order to supplement the data being collected. The evaluation team worked with Visit Wales colleagues to identify additional questions for inclusion in the Wales Visitor Survey (with these additional questions to be used with visitors to TAD sites surveyed as part of the Wales Visitor Survey). These additional questions sought to understand to what extent TAD sites were a reason for visitors' visits to the region and also to collect data on visitor satisfaction and perceptions.

- 1.15 The rationale for focusing on mainly qualitative methods during the interim evaluation phase was that this direct engagement with joint beneficiaries would best enable the evaluation team to establish a good knowledge of projects' progress, challenges and the local factors and context that impact on implementation. While this evaluation is principally concerned with TAD at the operational level (as opposed to assessing the impacts of individual projects), we nevertheless acknowledge the need to draw on project-level data and to work closely with joint beneficiaries to access the most robust data available – including project narratives as well as more readily measurable output data. Survey-based approaches were therefore discounted as it was felt that interviews and site visits would provide a deeper understanding of project progress and trajectories.
- 1.16 One of the limitations of the methodology and of the data available at this stage is linked to the different stages of development of TAD projects. The methodology has employed fairly uniform methods (albeit that questions have been tailored to reflect projects' different circumstances) whilst projects are at vastly different stages of development at this interim stage. As a result the data draws on the views and experiences of some joint beneficiaries that have completed and are operational whereas others are still at the very early stages of construction. There is consequently limited output data on which to draw at this interim stage. Therefore this report draws largely on key project representatives' perceptions of the operation, their projects' progress and identified learning points for ongoing delivery.
- 1.17 Looking ahead to tasks in preparation for the final phase of the study, the evaluation team will work with the evaluation Steering Group to ensure there is a robust impact framework (and accompanying monitoring and evaluation arrangements) in place to ensure that TAD's anticipated outcomes can be captured

and evidenced. The team will advise joint beneficiaries on the data collection tools or methods that could be used to fill gaps in data ahead of final round of field work in 2020. In turn, final evaluation visits will be carried out in 2020 to review project progress and outcomes. Data collected will be analysed and presented in a draft evaluation report January 2021 (to be completed by March 2021).

Structure of this interim report

1.18 This report includes the following sections:

- Background and context to the operation
- Data collection processes at operation and project level
- Interim evaluation findings
- Integration of cross-cutting themes and the Welsh language in the operation
- Marketing
- Interim conclusions and recommendations

2. Background and context to the operation

- 2.1 The 2014-2020 ERDF Programme is focused on supporting investments that contribute to the creation of sustainable jobs and economic growth. The Tourism Attractor Destinations operation was designed to support the ERDF objectives under Priority 4.4: to increase employment through investments in prioritised or regional infrastructure supporting a regional or urban economic strategy. TAD's objective is to deliver economically significant investment in key tourism assets that will attract further business investment and business growth to deliver key outcomes in terms of employment and regeneration.
- 2.2 Since Wales first became eligible for European Structural Funds in 2000, Visit Wales and its predecessor bodies have led a series of strategic EU-funded programmes to help focus capital investment to develop tourism quality, products and destinations in support of Wales' wider economic, regeneration and environmental objectives. TAD is arguably the most ambitious of these initiatives in terms of its scale and aims, with its emphasis on supporting iconic destinations capable of achieving transformational change for the Welsh visitor economy and delivering an increase in visitor numbers to funded projects.

Management and delivery of TAD

- 2.3 The management and delivery of TAD comprises multiple 'tiers'. WEFO is the Managing Authority (MA) for the European Structural and Investment Funds in Wales and is responsible for overseeing and monitoring Programmes, including the West Wales and the Valleys ERDF Programme. Visit Wales, a division within the Economy, Skills and Natural Resources department of the Welsh Government is the lead beneficiary and is responsible for delivery at the operational level. There are 13 joint beneficiaries who are in receipt of varying amounts of operation funding to support their projects. In turn, each joint beneficiary is engaged with local stakeholders to support project delivery, with, in some cases, designated partner beneficiaries leading on specific elements of projects. It is, therefore, a fairly densely layered operation, with relationships and joint-working key to its effective delivery.

The TAD operation and its role in supporting the 2014-2020 ERDF Programme

2.4 Activity is only targeted at sites in West Wales and the Valleys, as defined in the Operational Programme.⁸ The associated result indicator for Specific Objective 4.4 measures the reduction in the claimant count in travel to work areas and includes a target to reduce the claimant count by 8 per cent on average. Specific output indicators identified have been set for Objective 4.4, with accompanying targets for the TAD operation by 2023. These are set out in Table 2.1. TAD projects have set additional targets to increase visitor numbers. Across all TAD sites there is a combined target of 410,839, however this is not an indicator required by WEFO. WEFO's indicators reflect its role in ensuring funds are used in ways that contribute to defined ERDF Programme Objectives. Visit Wales' priorities are to support and promote the tourism sector, to increase visitor number and enhance visitor experiences.

Table 2.1 WEFO Indicators and targets for Priority 4.4 and accompanying targets for TAD operation

Indicator	Measurement Unit	Target Value - Priority 4.4 (2023)	TAD operation
Land developed	Ha	50	27.81
Premises created or refurbished	m ²	56,430	33,226
Jobs accommodated	Number	1,770	357.5
SMEs accommodated	Number	235	57

Current national tourism strategy: *Partnership for Growth*

2.5 The current Wales tourism strategy, *Partnership for Growth (P4G)*⁹, spans the period from 2013-2020. The strategy defined a series of priorities for the tourism sector, placing an emphasis on partnership working between the Welsh Government, private sector and other stakeholders. The strategy recognised the various internal and external influences that impact the tourism sector and invited

⁸ [West Wales and the Valleys Operational Programmes 2014-2020](#)

⁹ [Partnership for Growth, Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020](#)

'the industry and other local, regional and national public sector bodies, to align themselves with its goals and to work together to achieve them'. A number of *Partnership for Growth's* strategic priorities echo the underpinning objectives of the TAD operation, including:

- Promote Wales as a destination by making a high-quality tourism offer;
- Work to extend the tourism season and associated benefits;
- Identify funding opportunities to improve the visitor infrastructure and product in Wales.

2.6 A key outcome of P4G has been the development of a new Wales brand by Visit Wales/Welsh Government with the brand execution for tourism being *'This is Wales/Gwlad Gwlad'*. All tourism projects supported via Visit Wales must be able to demonstrate compliance and complementarity in terms of the brand objectives:

- Elevate our status
- Surprise and inspire
- Change perceptions
- Do good things
- Be unmistakably Wales

2.7 To reinforce this brand development Visit Wales has provided focused leadership for marketing and product development in terms of themed 'Years of.....Adventure, Legends, Sea, Discovery etc' together with route-based tourism (the Wales Way) – the latter particularly aimed at overseas and first-time visitors to Wales, with a view to promoting itineraries and encouraging longer dwell time.

2.8 In devising the TAD operation Visit Wales has been very clear that it sits at the apex of a 'pyramid' of complementary investment mechanisms to improve the overall visitor experience in Wales. These other funding mechanisms all share the same brand imperatives in support of the strategic goals of P4G and include:

- Wales Tourism Investment Fund – 'patient' finance (grant/ loan) up to £5m

- Micro Small Business Fund – up to £500k (supported through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development))
- Tourism Amenity Investment Fund – public realm improvements (EU RDP supported)
- Tourism Product Innovation Fund – revenue fund (new product development)
- Regional Tourism Engagement Fund – revenue fund (destination activities)
- A fund to support businesses and organisations operating in the foundational economy. Tourism is one of seven foundational sectors and businesses are able to access support through the Foundational Economy Challenge Fund aimed at supporting experimental projects in these sectors.

2.9 It is important to recognise, therefore, that TAD is one (important) element in a suite of initiatives and funds that collectively contribute to a common vision for the sector in Wales, as set out in Partnership for Growth. The original targets set for Partnership for Growth were as follows:

- 10 per cent growth in real terms value of tourism revenue (= 29 per cent in cash terms)
- Tourism employment growth from 88,300 to 97,130 FTE
- Tourism contribution to GVA from 4.4 per cent to 4.8 per cent

2.10 The 2016 Partnership for Growth Strategy Progress Review confirmed that the sector was well on course to exceed these targets with employment already at 132,400 and GVA at 6 per cent.¹⁰ The revenue growth target was recast explicitly in terms of *staying* visitors and this was also well on course to substantially exceed the target. Analysis undertaken by Visit Wales, based on the Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), International Passenger Survey (IPS) and the Wales Day Visitor Survey (WDVS), ahead of consultation on a new tourism action plan for 2020

¹⁰ [Tourism strategy \(partnership for growth\): progress review \(2016\)](#)

onwards shows a growth in overall tourism value from £4.5bn to £6.3bn or 40 per cent in cash terms.

Wales tourism challenges

- 2.11 Visit Wales has recently embarked on the development of a new medium-term action plan to succeed *Partnership for Growth*. As an introduction to wide consultation on this new action plan, Visit Wales identified the challenges and barriers to growth which remain for the tourism sector in Wales, especially in comparison with key comparator destinations.
- 2.12 **Visitors of the future** – finding new markets to supplement existing loyal but relatively low-spending UK-based couples and families and driving business outside the traditional holiday periods to break the impacts of seasonality on sustainability, employment quality and reinvestment. The GBTS results for 2018 show that seasonality remains a persistent factor with 67 per cent of revenue and visits being generated in Quarters 2 and 3 (this is over 70 per cent in mid, north and south west Wales). These values have not shifted over the last decade. The impacts of Brexit on UK and overseas markets remains a significant unknown factor.
- 2.13 **International visitors** – Wales currently attracts 1 million overseas visitors per year, who spend more and appreciate cultural distinctiveness, but is underperforming compared with the rest of Great Britain, despite the unique Welsh cultural offer. Wales has 4.8 per cent of the UK population. While Tourism is overall proportionately more important per head to Wales than the other UK countries, it only receives 2.5 per cent of the UK's international visits and 1.5 per cent of the value. There are significant requirements in terms of workforce training, products and quality in order to establish the skills and capacity to improve Wales' performance relative to the rest of the UK in terms of international visitors.
- 2.14 **Meeting visitor expectations** – based on the Wales Visitor Survey, satisfaction levels are high (9.2/10) but the quality, variety and sustainability of the visitor experience needs to meet the rising expectations of those not yet committed to Wales.

- 2.15 **Focus** – resources, public and private, are limited, so Wales may need to ‘do fewer things better’. Previous consumer research by Visit Wales identified that Wales is still seen by some as a ‘something for everyone’ destination, while not excelling in any particular area. This is the rationale for the focused spatial and product development evident through themed years (e.g. Year of Adventure, Year of the Sea, Year of Legends) and the ‘Wales Way’ approaches.
- 2.16 **Community benefit** – tourism cannot expect to receive unconditional support unless it can demonstrate more clearly the positive contribution it makes to community well-being, cohesion and culture.
- 2.17 **Partnership** – there are estimated to be 10,500 businesses directly engaged in tourism in Wales, the vast majority are small and micro enterprises alongside many public sector organisations and agencies with a significant influence. More progress is needed on effective joint working at community, destination and national level to optimise collective impact.
- 2.18 **Digital** – the ways visitors are accessing, booking, consuming, recording and assessing experiences and destinations are moving increasingly into the digital sphere. Wales as a destination is not yet making best use of the technologies available to learn more about visitors and manage destinations.
- 2.19 **Quality** – Wales has the raw materials for successful tourism – landscape, people and culture – but so have many other comparator destinations. Quality of welcome, service and experience are vital determinants and differentiators.
- 2.20 **Communications and access** – getting to and around Wales in quick, easy, sustainable and healthy ways should come as standard but how can tourism lead and influence the infrastructure decisions which allows this?
- 2.21 **Sustainability** – Wales is not yet suffering from over-tourism but visitors are now very conscious of the sustainable credentials of the destinations they choose.

Looking ahead: the next tourism action plan

Stakeholder consultations have only recently finished and so it is premature to speculate what the next medium-term tourism plan for Wales will look like.

However, it can be safely assumed that tourism, insofar that it is led by Visit Wales, with support from other government departments, organisations and agencies,

including local government at destination level, will need to acknowledge the opportunities and responsibilities inherent in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015). Indeed it is a sector that is in a position to make a significant positive contribution at community, destination and national level to each of the seven well-being goals.¹¹ While the TAD operation was devised before the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act came into force it would no doubt be helpful, not least in thinking about lessons for future initiatives, to consider incorporating elements of the national well-being outcomes framework into wider impact framework proposed as part of the final stage evaluation of TAD.

TAD projects: selection process and overview of projects

- 2.22 The selection of joint beneficiaries through the TAD operation involved a different approach to that taken through previous funding programmes supported through ERDF, including Environment for Growth (E4G). TAD projects were identified and selected through a regional prioritisation exercise, involving regional economic boards and key delivery partners, who subsequently became joint beneficiaries. The process involved identifying and short-listing potential projects at a regional level, with the regional economic boards engaged in this process, in discussion with Visit Wales. This contrasts with the approach taken under E4G, which involved tendering processes as a means of selecting projects.
- 2.23 Projects were identified before Programme funding was confirmed, which was also a departure from the way in which previous programmes had been planned. There was consensus among stakeholders that this approach was important (and 'unique') in securing buy-in and ownership at the regional level and that it also helped establish partnership working as a key feature of the operation from the outset.
- 2.24 As part of the process of formulating project proposals, joint beneficiaries were required to conduct option appraisals, assessing proposals to develop local sites or attractions against ERDF Programme's investment aims. Projects' alignment with national priorities for the tourism sector was also assessed during this process. The

¹¹ A prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; a globally responsible Wales.

TAD Business Plan summarises the options and scenarios considered by joint beneficiaries during the planning and selection process.

2.25 The 13 project sites selected and supported through TAD are broad in their scope and aims. A list of supported projects and brief description of their focus is set out below. Eight out of thirteen joint beneficiaries are public sector organisations. Annex 2 provides a one-page summary of each project's progress and status. At the time of preparing this report, three projects have completed in full and one partner beneficiary has completed a redevelopment and has reported on outputs for inclusion in this report (see section 3.4, Table 3.1).

Table 2.2 Overview of 13 TAD projects

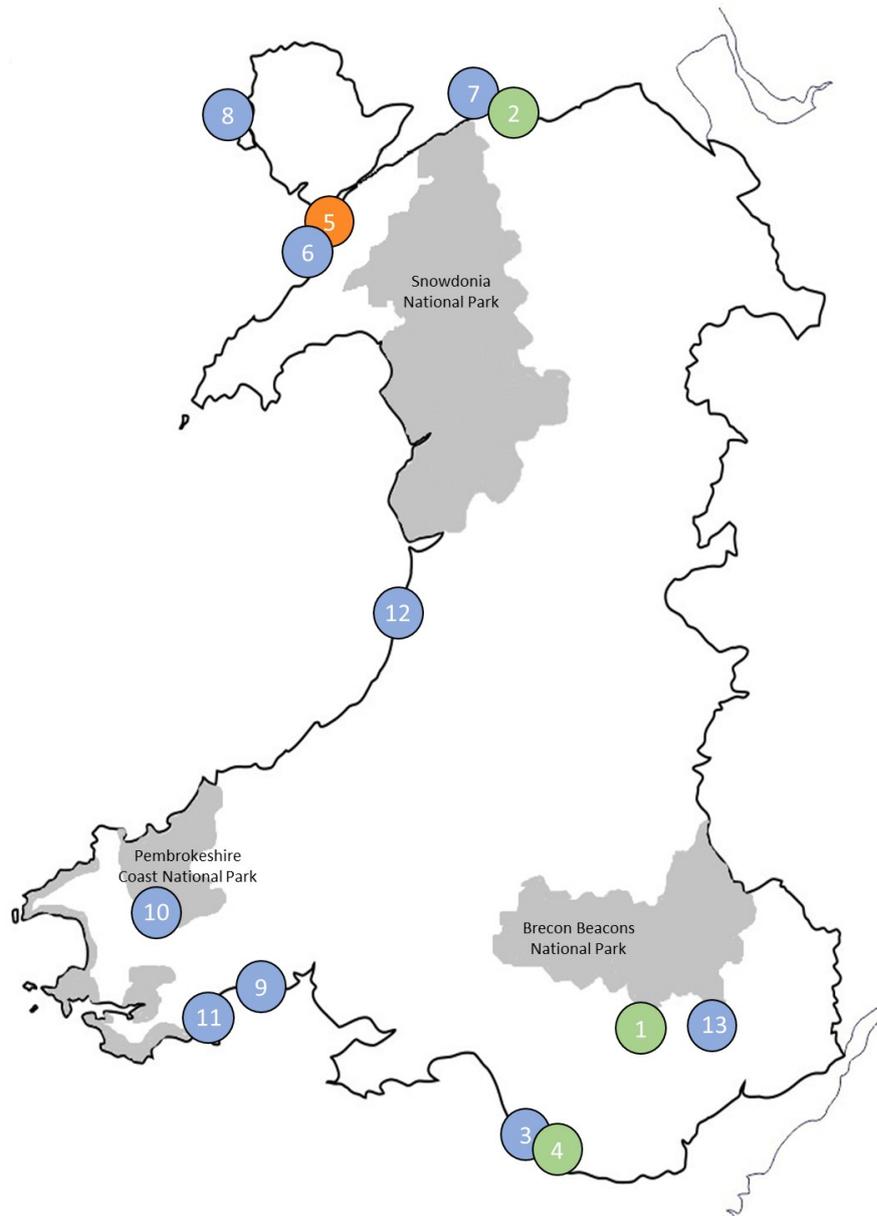
No. in figure 2.1	Project / Joint Beneficiary (Location)	Summary
1	Adventure Welsh Valleys / Rock UK Adventure Centres Ltd (Merthyr Tydfil)	Extension and refurbishment of the adventure climbing centre to include new en-suite accommodation for 100 residential guests; a new cafe, outdoor play area and facilities for additional outdoor activities. <i>Launch: Nov 2016; Completion: June 2018</i>
2	Colwyn Bay Waterfront / Conwy CBC (Colwyn Bay Promenade)	This project will build upon previous developments, improving a further 1km of the promenade, creating additional space for kiosks, parking, new activity and interest points. <i>Launch: November 2016; Completion: Aug 2018</i>
3	The Maritime Centre Porthcawl / Credu Charity Ltd (Porthcawl)	<i>Development of a maritime centre which will include a coastal science and discovery centre, well-being facilities, learning café / bistro, prestige restaurant and events space.</i> <i>Launch: Feb 2017; Completion: Aug 2020</i>
4	Porthcawl Resort Investment Focus – (PRIF) Waterside / Bridgend CBC (Porthcawl)	Development of a multi-purpose watersports and café facility at Rest Bay; the refurbishment of the harbour kiosk to provide improved facilities for boat users; and new cycle route connecting all of Porthcawl bays. <i>Launch: Oct 2018; Completion: March 2019 (Kiosk) Aug 2019 (Watersports Centre)</i>
5	Caernarfon Waterfront / Gwynedd Council (Caernarfon)	New terminus building and station facilities for the Welsh Highland Railway; extend the Galeri Creative Enterprise Centre to provide cinema facilities, offices and creative workspace; develop new physical linkages to connect key sites in Caernarfon. <i>Launch: March 2017; Completion: Aug 2018 (Galeri), April 2019 (WHR), Dec 2020 (Access and Linkages)</i>
6	Caernarfon Castle Kings Gate / Cadw, Welsh Government (Caernarfon)	Improved access to the upper levels of the castle's main entrance; new café area and immersive experiences; increased retail space and improvements to visitor toilets. <i>Launch: TBC; Completion: Dec 2020</i>
7	Venue Cymru / Conwy CBC (Llandudno)	Reconfiguration of Venue Cymru allowing better use of the space to accommodate business events and conferences. <i>Launch: Nov 2017; Completion: Sept 2019</i>
8	Holy island International Visitor Gateway / Isle of Anglesey Council	Ferry port terminus signage and interpretation for international visitors; access improvements to St Cybi's Church and Roman Fort; new signage and interpretation for self-guided tours on

	(Holyhead)	Holy Island; new motorhome and tourer caravan park at Breakwater Park Holyhead. <i>Launch: March 2018; Completion: Dec 2020</i>
9	Pendine Land Speed Cultural Centre and Eco Resort Complex / Carmarthenshire CC (Pendine)	New Land Speed Museum; new 42 bed Eco hostel; and new car parking and events infrastructure. <i>Launch: Feb 2018; Completion: Aug 2020</i>
10	Llys y Fran Park and Activity Centre / Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (Llys y Fran, Pembrokeshire)	Visitor centre refurbishment; new outdoor activity centre and waterside cabin; bike pump skills area and 10km cycle trail; and re-landscaping of the woodland, meadows and dam environs. <i>Launch: Oct 2018; Completion: Aug 2020</i>
11	Wales International Coastal Centre / Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners (Saundersfoot)	Comprising the following four linked developments: Marine Centre of Excellence and Coastal Storm Centre; Ocean Square Heritage & Arts Centre; Coastal Schooner Centre; and National Events Deck. <i>Launch: Nov 2018; Completion: Sept 2020</i>
12	Wales to the World / Vale of Rheidol Railway Ltd (Vale of Rheidol, Aberystwyth)	Conversion of existing engine shed into a new visitor attraction and steam engine museum; new platform, ticket office and café; relocation of toilet block and canopy; and storage building for the Heritage coaching stock. <i>Launch: Oct 2018; Completion: June 2019 (new station) Dec 2020 (museum and storage building)</i>
13	Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle / Torfaen & Caerphilly CBC (Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal)	New visitor centre at Pontymoile; infrastructure and access improvements to sections of the canal and surrounding landscapes to facilitate walking, cycling and boating activities; glamping accommodation and outdoor activities hub at Cwmcarn Forest. <i>Launch: July 2018; Completion: Dec 2020</i>

Figure 2.1 Map illustrating TAD project locations and projects' status at July 2019

Key:

- Projects that have completed fully and are operational.
- Projects where the most significant elements are completed and operational.
- Projects that are under construction***



*** NB: Projects indicated with a blue circle (Projects under construction) include some projects where specific work packages are complete. This includes the National Events Deck at Saundersfoot Harbour (11); the Vale of Rheidol (12) where the new platform, toilet and café are completed; and the Cwmcarn glamping pods and adventure hub as part of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle (13).

3. Data collection processes at operation and project level

Operation monitoring arrangements

- 3.1 TAD monitoring arrangements have been led by the Visit Wales TAD operation team, overseen by the Programme Manager. Funded projects have been required to provide quarterly claim forms, accompanied by progress reports. Progress reports, which are a fundamental part of identifying and managing risks during operation delivery, were required before payments were authorised by WEFO.
- 3.2 In addition to quarterly financial claims, the following information is required as part of quarterly progress reports:
- An update of progress and achievements in the relevant period;
 - Expenditure and variance in delivery profile;
 - Forward plans over the next period;
 - Progress made against cross-cutting themes;
 - Issues relating to monitoring data and planned evaluation activity;
 - Publicity;
 - Procurement activity undertaken;
 - Progress against milestones or conditions that apply to the operation;
 - Payments received;
 - An updated risk register.
 - Monitoring and evaluation
- 3.3 The dates of quarterly returns across the operation were staggered so that Visit Wales were not receiving returns and progress reports from all joint beneficiaries during the same month. The rationale for this was to spread monitoring activity (and associated engagement with joint beneficiaries) more evenly across the calendar year, helping to ensure a more even workload for the relatively small operational team in Visit Wales. In the view of joint beneficiaries and stakeholders interviewed, this was deemed to be a prudent approach.

Data on TAD operation expenditure

3.4 Table 3.1 presents total TAD operation costs by individual project. It also details total ERDF funds awarded to each project (and claimed to date, figures compiled in May 2019) and total Targeted Matched Funding (TMF) awarded (along with cumulative claim figures). The TAD operation totals £62.2m, of which £27.7m is ERDF programme funding with a further £9.7m awarded in TMF. (A further £24m in funding to support the operation has been secured through a range of sources. These are presented below in section 3.5). By May 2019, claims of £9.9m had been made in respect of ERDF funding, which corresponds to over 35 per cent of the total for the operation. A higher proportion of TMF had been claimed by the same date: £7.7m TMF was claimed by May 2019, which equates to just under 80 per cent of the total.

Table 3.1 Data on TAD operation expenditure to date by project and totals

Project	Total project costs	Total ERDF awarded	Total cumulative ERDF claimed	Total TMF awarded	Total cumulative TMF claimed
Adventure Welsh Valleys	£4,738,288	£2,543,000	£2,542,990	£65,180	£65,180
Colwyn Bay Waterfront	£3,833,709	£1,513,072	£1,399,612	£1,049,558	£1,049,558
Porthcawl Maritime Centre	£5,571,400	£2,134,060	£539,157	£600,000	£600,000
Porthcawl (PRIF)	£2,555,001	£1,565,941	£650,850	£71,000	£69,714
Caernarfon Waterfront	£6,670,521	£2,454,243	£2,382,294	£669,500	£635,465
Caernarfon Castle	£3,130,697	£1,040,751	£0	£0	£0
Venue Cymru	£2,791,642	£832,262	£423,126	£629,442	£629,442
Holy island	£2,898,280	£1,716,000	£0	£600,000	£323,308
Pendine Resort Complex	£7,027,875	£3,000,000	£26,773	£1,500,000	£868,909
Llys y Fran	£2,830,000	£1,700,000	£0	£0	£0
Wales International Coastal Centre	£9,000,928	£4,000,000	£1,620,120	£952,916	£952,442
Vale of Rheidol	£2,481,502	£1,612,946	£336,301	£256,154	£256,154
Adventure Triangle	£4,674,779	£2,000,000	£0	£1,456,100	£279,928
Visit Wales Marketing	£4,000,000	£1,582,727		£0	£0
ERDF Totals	£62,204,622	£27,695,002	£9,921,223	£7,849,850	£5,730,100

Other TAD funding streams

3.5 In addition to ERDF and TMF funds, TAD projects have secured funding from a range of other sources, totalling over £24m. Drawing on information set out in project business plans, this funding has been categorised in order to provide an understanding of the additional source of funding that are being used to support TAD projects. This funding comprises mostly public sector funds through various mechanisms. Local authority contributions, including loans, account for over £7m. Joint and partner beneficiaries accounts for a further £5m which also includes contributions from local authorities and a Welsh Government department. Welsh Government and other funding programmes, including Vibrant and Viable Places,¹² the Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS)¹³ and Coastal Communities Fund¹⁴ have been used to support projects. Bank loans total £2.7m across the TAD operation. Our analysis of business plans submitted by joint beneficiaries reveals a lack of private sector investment in TAD projects.

¹² [Vibrant and Viable Places Framework](#)

¹³ [Tourism Investment Support Scheme \(TISS\) Guidance Note](#)

¹⁴ [Coastal Communities Fund](#)

Table 3.2 Additional funding sources for TAD

Funding sources for TAD projects (in addition to ERDF and TMF)	Value (across all projects)
Local authority contributions	£7,221,785.00
Joint beneficiary / partner beneficiary contributions	£5,103,435.00
Welsh Government funding programmes	£4,459,572.00
Bank loans	£2,713,877.00
Other public sector body	£1,500,000.00
Capital asset transfer	£1,360,000.00
Community funds and foundations	£1,051,135.00
Lottery funds	£905,000.00
Third sector contribution	£137,340.00
Total	£24,452,144.00

Source: TAD project business plans.

Progress against operation-level indicators

3.6 Below we present the aggregated data from completed projects in relation to the four WEFO indicators. No targets were set for this interim phase of the operation. It should be noted that these figures are derived from data from only three completed projects and as such, few if any conclusions can be drawn from the data. Those projects that have completed have achieved – and in some cases exceeded – their project-level targets, which is encouraging. However the number of completed projects is small and it remains to be seen whether other projects will deliver against their targets. Furthermore the picture at the end of the operation may be complicated by the fact that some projects have experienced delays and are likely to reach completion at the very end of the operation’s timeframe, possibly leading to delays in confirming final WEFO indicator outputs. This will be discussed and confirmed during the final evaluation phase.

Table 3.3 WEFO Indicators and targets for Priority 4.4 and accompanying targets for TAD operation

WEFO Indicator	Target Value - Priority 4.4 (2023)	TAD operation	Achievement (at July 2019)*
Land developed (Ha)	50	27.81	3.95Ha
Premises created or refurbished (m ²)	56,430	33,226	4,143m ²
Jobs accommodated † (number)	1,770	357.5	84
SMEs accommodated (number)	235	57	8

Source: Visit Wales TAD monitoring data

NB The data set out in this table is based on provisional output data provided by 3 projects. In addition, output data is subject to amendment following verification by Visit Wales.

* Based on monitoring reports from 3 completed projects

† Excludes data from one completed project which has reported, to date, on 'jobs created' as opposed to jobs accommodated, which is the formal ERDF indicator. The distinction is that jobs created refers to actual new jobs created at the site, as opposed to the 'jobs accommodated' indicator which is a figure derived from a calculation of FTE jobs per m² developed or refurbished. All projects are required to report project outputs against the four WEFO indicators listed above.

Visit Wales visitor numbers indicator

- 3.7 Only one completed project has supplied data on the additional Visit Wales indicator. This has not been included in this report. Discussions with projects explored their planned methods to capturing this data. In some cases, where new facilities or sites are being developed, increases in visitor numbers are clear, as the baseline will be zero. Other projects have raised questions about approaches to identifying *additional* visitors and attributing these to the TAD operation. In many cases, approaches to capturing visitor numbers need to be formalised so that projects and Visit Wales are able to report against this target in a robust way.

Anticipated impacts and related baseline data

Links between project impacts and data collection arrangements

- 3.8 During interim evaluation visits to joint beneficiaries, project representatives were asked to summarise the impacts they expected their projects to deliver, discussions were steered towards understanding what data collection processes were in place to enable these impacts to be demonstrated.
- 3.9 These issues were discussed initially as open questions in order to explore a number of points: i) to what extent the impacts cited (unprompted) were aligned with the Programme and operation targets; ii) what project-specific impacts were presented, requiring specific data collection processes; iii) whether any common themes or threads run throughout the TAD projects. Before turning to the issue of baseline data, we outline the evaluation's reflections on these questions.
- 3.10 Firstly, there is alignment between the projects' anticipated outcomes and WEFO indicators, albeit some indicators more so than others. There was an emphasis on physical redevelopment and regeneration as an intended outcome, for example, which aligns with the 'land developed' and 'premises created or refurbished' targets. However, unprompted, very few project representatives made reference to increasing employment as an intended outcome. There was a recognition that successfully delivered projects would provide employment opportunities or safeguard employment, however very few joint beneficiaries presented their projects as investments driven by the strategic aim of increasing local employment. All projects, however, acknowledge WEFO's targets as being overarching performance measurements against which core project delivery would be assessed.
- 3.11 As might be expected, joint beneficiaries outlined a range of anticipated impacts, reflecting the diverse nature of TAD projects and reflecting also the level of aspiration attached to the operation. Below is a selected list of issues raised, and it is possible to categorise these impacts under three inter-linked and inter-dependent headings:

Table 3.4 Anticipated wider impacts of TAD

Impacts on visitors / tourism offer (e.g...)	Impacts on places (e.g...)	Wider community and economic benefits (e.g...)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase visitor numbers; • Improve the visitor experience; • Diversify a site’s offer to visitors; • Improve accessibility for visitors to sites/locations; • Reduce seasonality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade physical infrastructure; • Support regeneration in the local area; • Serve as a catalyst for other associated developments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver commercial benefit / support joint beneficiaries sustainability; • Safeguard and create jobs; • Contribute to civic pride / sense of place; • Challenge and re-define perceptions of sites/local areas.

3.12 Joint beneficiaries recognise the need to collect project-specific data that reflects their own objectives and intended outcomes. The amount and level of detail of baseline data shared with the evaluators varied between projects. Some were able to draw on historical data revealing trends over time in ticket sales and visitor numbers at sites that were being improved or upgraded while others were able to identify the type of data they would like to capture or expected to collect going forward. A few projects explained that their overall monitoring and evaluation approach at project level was still being finalised and that core indicators may be developed further in future. (See below for further commentary on the available baseline data).

3.13 Thirdly, we considered what commonalities, if any, there were across the anticipated impacts of these diverse projects. Taking their cue from the overarching TAD operation business plan, all projects aspire to have a transformative effect on visitors or on their local areas. This aspiration to bring about transformational change is, however, not clearly defined. One consistent feature that project representatives aspire towards is to raise the quality of their sites or attractions in a marked way – to elevate the visitor experience and alter perceptions of these destinations. Capturing changes in visitor perceptions, alongside the views of local residents and stakeholders, therefore, will be key to a final evaluation of the operation.

Available baseline data

- 3.14 This section provides an overview of the common types of data collected at project level, although no individual project is likely to gather such a wide range of data as presented below.
- 3.15 The most common type of data collected at project level is visitor numbers. This type of data takes a variety of forms, depending on the nature of the project; for example, ticket sales, bookings, counts of visitors at certain sites. A few projects collect a more detailed breakdown of visitor data than others, including demographic data.
- 3.16 Alongside this, it is common for projects to collect footfall data, particularly those sites that are developing publicly available spaces where there are no ticket sales or gate. This includes the use of city-wide footfall counters placed at key strategic locations, as well as footfall at particular locations or buildings (such as entries into a particular exhibit, along a particular pathway or into an event space). While some projects already have some form of footfall data, others plan on installing counters in future in order to measure visitor numbers to new spaces built or developed through the TAD operation.
- 3.17 Projects also referred to baseline data drawn from car park ticket sales, which can be used to measure and compare visitor numbers over time. Where relevant, projects also collect data on visitor spend and profits of specific cost centres. This data varies depending on the income streams available but commonly include income from tickets and bookings, spend in cafes or restaurants and profits for businesses or tenants within project spaces. As such, a small number of projects collect data on the take up and commercial strength of rental spaces / local business health where this is a key focus for the project. Baseline data does not necessarily exist yet for rental or business spaces which are yet to be developed, but they are seen as a key performance indicator going forward.
- 3.18 In a few cases, projects emphasise that the number of jobs created and maintained going forward is important baseline data; going beyond the ERDF indicator of jobs accommodated, these projects drew attention to available data relating to the demographic of employees and overall community benefits resulting from employment opportunities.

- 3.19 A minority of projects collect some form of visitor feedback, either through visitor surveys, online feedback or audience evaluations. The focus of this data is primarily on visitor satisfaction. The frequency and level of detail of this data varies between projects. Given the emphasis on capturing visitor perceptions of sites, there is an argument to be made to ensure that all sites collect relevant data using a more standardised approach.
- 3.20 A minority of projects emphasised that, since their project is an element of wider regeneration and tourism activities within the region, local authority or regional regeneration KPIs are also important performance measures for their TAD project. Although many other strategies, activities and projects feed in to these KPIs, they are seen as a central performance measure of the overall transformation of the local area.
- 3.21 A couple of projects collect telemetric data (through Wi-Fi connections) which can be used to gather evidence relating to the movement of visitors through pathways and spaces, as well as some information relating to their demographic. In one case, telemetric data is only starting to be collected now.
- 3.22 Alongside this, a number of projects also emphasised that they are keen to explore and collect softer evidence of progress or impact, such as a perceived improvements in the quality of their tourism offer improved accessibility of spaces, although precise measures and data collection processes were not yet in place.
- 3.23 A minority of projects also referenced other available baseline data relating specifically to their type of activities, including gift aid donations, subscriptions to newsletters and an existing baseline economic impact assessment.

Observations and issues for consideration in relation to baseline data

- 3.24 Based on information provided by joint beneficiaries, there appear to be challenges in establishing a robust baseline at individual project level against which to measure progress and outcomes, particularly wider project outcomes. In some cases projects reported having relatively little data collection systems in place and little historic data against which to benchmark. For other projects which were new developments, it was suggested that it was too early to establish a baseline. Indeed, some projects noted that it would not be realistic to establish a baseline until they neared completion in late 2020.

- 3.25 Some project representatives felt that establishing a 'clear baseline for the TAD project' and attributing impacts to TAD funding was problematic: these noted that TAD funding formed part of a wider programme of regeneration and that this needed to be taken into account when using data from footfall counters, car park ticket sales and other sources as increases may not be directly or solely attributable to TAD funding.
- 3.26 Projects reported challenges in collecting visitor feedback, explaining that time constraints and other priorities had been a factor. Also, very few projects had plans in place to collect data to capture wider economic or community impacts, including impacts on the perceptions of local people of the sites being developed or on wellbeing.
- 3.27 Baseline data is therefore patchy and processes for collecting data to evidence the range of anticipated impacts set out in section 3.11 are in many cases under-developed. Projects' ambitions to deliver transformational change (which we consider in the following chapter) are not accompanied by robust data collection processes to capture and understand the extent of these changes.

4. Interim evaluation findings

4.1 This chapter of the report considers the following:

- Transformational change
- The operation's strategic fit, including in the context of the ERDF programme and wider Welsh Government strategic priorities to support the visitor economy
- Operational management of TAD by Visit Wales
- Operational delivery of TAD to date
- Partnership working
- The emerging added value and impact of TAD funding (on joint beneficiaries and wider partners)

Transformational change

4.2 ERDF Programme documentation emphasises the importance of concentrating Structural Fund resources in order to achieve a transformational impact. This language permeates the TAD Business Plan, which noted:

'The operation provides a framework for the development of a limited number of regionally-prioritised tourism sites which have the potential to become iconic, must see tourism destinations within the programme area. The scale of the capital investment envisaged has the potential to deliver transformational change for the Welsh visitor economy.'

4.3 Individual projects, in turn, echoed these aspirations. However, it is apparent from ERDF Programme documentation, TAD operation documentation and individual joint beneficiary interviews that there are different interpretations of the type of transformative effects that could be seen as a result of the funding. In some cases, transformation of physical resources or infrastructure, in other cases there is reference to transforming the visitor experience at various TAD sites and transforming the quality of life of local residents. It is important to reflect on, and even disentangle, these different interpretations of 'transformational change' at this interim stage, and to classify them so that a final assessment of the operation's impact takes these into account. Drawing on evidence collected to date, we

suggest the following as a broad framework for exploring the various types of transformational change given effect by TAD.

Table 4.1. The different levels of transformational change: an initial framework

Transformation in relation to:	Underpinning question
Visitor experience	Has TAD transformed visitors' experience in terms of quality, choice or overall perception of sites supported through the operation?
Joint beneficiaries and partner beneficiaries	Has TAD transformed organisations' operations, capacity, expertise, future strategic plans?
Local / regional tourism offer	Have TAD projects, transformed the visitor offer locally or regionally?
National tourism offer	To what extent have TAD projects, <u>collectively</u> , transformed the visitor offer Wales-wide?

4.4 At this stage of the operation, and given the limitations in available data outlined in the preceding chapter, it remains too early to quantify impacts in relation to this preliminary framework. It is fair to say that many projects are focusing on transforming the local tourism offer through their developments, with an underlying assumption that collectively the projects will enhance perceptions of the national tourism offer. This hypothesis, which may be open to question in view of the geographic spread and range of project activity, will be explored in the final evaluation report.

Strategic fit

4.5 The evaluation seeks to answer a number of specific questions relating to the strategic fit of the operation. The question of strategic fit can be considered through a number of lenses. Firstly, there is the question of TAD's alignment with the ERDF programme and the specific objective under which it is funded; secondly, TAD

projects' strategic fit and complementarity in terms of wider priorities to develop the visitor economy in Wales and other core Welsh Government policies; and thirdly, the extent to which the operation is aligned with other local or regional regeneration priorities. The following sections summarise evidence in relation to each of these three areas of strategic alignment based on evidence reviewed to date.

Alignment with ERDF and Specific Objective 4.4

- 4.6 The TAD operation supports the ERDF objectives under Priority 4.4, which aims to increase employment through investments in prioritised or regional infrastructure. TAD's investment in tourism infrastructure projects supports a priority sector of the foundational economy identified by the Welsh Government. TAD projects contribute to increasing employment both directly and indirectly through their operational activity, through construction activity supported and supply chains.
- 4.7 In the context of the wider West Wales and the Valleys ERDF Operational Programme, TAD is aligned with and incorporates the core design principles which have guided the approach to using Structural Funds. The operation demonstrates greater concentration of resources, focusing on doing fewer things in fewer places for greater impact. TAD also provides examples of integration of funding with wider investment programmes across the public sector. Therefore, at this interim stage, it is possible to identify complementarity and alignment with the wider ERDF programme and specific objective under which the operation is funded. The extent of the operation's contribution to the strategic aims remains to be seen and will be dependent on the successful completion of remaining projects.

Strategic fit with wider Welsh Government priorities for tourism and sustainability

- 4.8 The issue of alignment between TAD projects and other tourism and wider Welsh Government priorities is interlinked with the approach taken to project selection (this is outlined in further detail below, section 4.12). The way in which Visit Wales designed the scoring and selection criteria during the operation's development ensured that the Projects selected were aligned with, and contributed towards, national strategic objectives. Stakeholders interviewed are comfortable with the spread and mix of projects that are being supported. As a group of projects they

have clear links to opportunity areas set out in the Welsh Government's Tourism Strategy, including supporting Heritage and Culture, Activities and Adventure and the Natural Environment.

- 4.9 TAD is considered to be complementary to other Visit Wales schemes and strategies. Some interviewees noted that the operation was providing additional impetus or a 'final push' for some longer-term plans. This demonstrates that there were strategic and pragmatic considerations behind the selection of some projects. Stakeholders noted that TAD complements other strategic funding schemes the Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS) and the Tourism Amenity Investment Support (TAIS).
- 4.10 Most TAD sites are located on or in close proximity to the Wales Way, a group of three national routes that lead visitors along the west coast, across North Wales, and through Wales' mountainous heartland. There are opportunities through future marketing activity to promote TAD sites as part of the wider promotion of the Wales Way, linking them to other regional attractions and landmarks.
- 4.11 In the operation Business Plan, Visit Wales reaffirmed its commitment to support the tourism sector to grow in a sustainable way and to make '*an increasing contribution to the economic, social and environmental well-being of communities within the programme area*'. Joint beneficiaries and their partners were required to provide information in their business plans on how projects will *actively contribute* to the goals for sustainable development set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Examples were raised during interviews with joint beneficiaries of how projects are contributing to a healthier and more prosperous Wales and greater community cohesion, among other well-being goals. However these were provided as qualitative, anecdotal examples and it does not appear that the operation's contribution to well-being goals is being captured in a systematic way, using the well-being indicators that have been developed. This is something that will be explored as part of discussions regarding an impact framework during the final phase of the evaluation.

Operational management

- 4.12 After several iterations a Final Business Plan for TAD was approved by WEFO on 15 March 2016. Visit Wales had initially understood that one detailed Business Plan for the whole operation would be sufficient, however they were subsequently informed by WEFO that individual Project Business Plans were required. Strategic partners reported that this caused duplication and delay to the planning and approval process. From WEFO's perspective, the process of approving individual Joint Beneficiary Business Plans required a substantial investment of time, reflecting the fact that each Business Plan was unique. Each Business Plan had to be considered separately and on its own merits, ensuring that the Plan was fit for purpose for the specific activity in question but also that it complemented and contributed to the broader TAD operation.
- 4.13 Communication and information sharing during the Business Planning phase was largely felt to be effective. It was agreed from the outset that correspondence from joint beneficiaries would be channelled via Visit Wales as the lead beneficiary. Visit Wales dealt with any Joint Beneficiary queries they were able to resolve, before consulting with WEFO officials on any matters requiring additional clarification or guidance. This, it was felt by WEFO, helped ensure a more streamlined, efficient and consistent approach to providing guidance and advice to joint beneficiaries.
- 4.14 It was noted that further apparent delay to projects was caused by WEFO requiring each Project to reach RIBA stage 3.¹⁵ This was a cause of concern for some projects and was not compatible with a number of joint beneficiaries' preferred approaches. For example Vale of Rheidol developed their project in-house and didn't feel that RIBA 3 was necessary at this stage. Strategic leads for the operation felt that this ultimately may have served to accelerate progress as costings and project planning were more accurate and better developed once approved. Visit Wales were aware of joint beneficiaries' concerns that initial design work was undertaken at their own risk ahead of formal Project approval.

¹⁵ The RIBA plan of work comprises of eight separate work stages that each address a required phase of a construction projects progression, from inception through to completion. Each stage has specified tasks and outputs, which aim to ensure that work is carried out and completed to a high professional standard. RIBA stage 3 requires that projects 'Prepare Developed Design', setting out proposals for structural design, building services systems, outline specifications and cost information for approval by the local planning authority.

4.15 Some strategic partners interviewed reported that the number and range of joint beneficiaries involved in TAD presents challenges for Visit Wales, including supporting and communicating with 13 different projects delivered by a range of organisations, progressing at different speeds and each with its own unique challenges.

Delivery of TAD projects to date

4.16 Visit Wales has taken a staggered approach to Project approval and roll-out. This has ensured that those projects which were ready to proceed have not been held up by any delays or modifications to other projects' plans or timetables. Progress has been variable – while a small number of projects have completed and are operational, a number of others have experienced delays for a range of technical and operational reasons.

4.17 The current position of the TAD operation is made up of:

- Three projects that have completed fully and are operational;
- Another project where the most significant elements are completed and operational;
- Projects that are under construction, although in some cases – as noted in Figure 2.1 – these projects include work packages that have been completed;
- Two projects are experiencing delays: the Porthawl Maritime Centre is still going through the design / land assembly phase and is not yet on-site; Llys y Fran Park and Activity Centre has had issues at the construction phase as the contractor has gone into administration.

4.18 There are both potential benefits and disadvantages to the variable progress of TAD projects. There is the advantage that those projects at earlier stages of delivery can learn from the experiences of more advanced projects. The quarterly meetings of TAD joint beneficiaries provides a forum to help facilitate this exchange of information and experience; however, to date it is generally felt by joint beneficiaries that further knowledge exchange sharing of good practice could be facilitated at these meetings. However, from an evaluation perspective, the different timeframes for delivery present challenges in that project-level data on outcomes

will become clear at differing points in time, potentially making it difficult to analyse and arrive at an aggregated operation-wide evaluation of key outcome measures and wider benefits.

4.19 The principal challenges reported by joint beneficiaries are:

- Delays in finalising plans, securing approval and signing contracts. It would appear that several factors combined to cause these delays. In some cases, it was noted there was a need to revise project-level business plans to improve the level of detail and quality of some aspects of the plans. Additionally, some joint beneficiaries attributed delays to shifting requirements from WEFO and Visit Wales, particularly linked to achieving RIBA stage 3, as noted above. It is important to note that joint beneficiaries value the support provided by Visit Wales however some felt Visit Wales's role as an intermediary between joint beneficiaries and WEFO slowed the process down.
- A number of joint beneficiaries have experienced technical difficulties associated with major construction projects. A number of projects involve the upgrading and/or refurbishment of old, listed buildings, e.g. Caernarfon Castle, which has caused some tensions with statutory partners and challenges in terms of delivery. In addition, a number of projects are being developed in environmentally sensitive locations, which in some instances has led to delays. For example, some works at the Monmouthshire Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle can only take place at certain times of the year due to ecological issues associated with the otter community.
- Some joint beneficiaries have experienced difficulties relating to tendering and securing contractors, which has caused slippage. The Llys y Fran Park and Activity Centre is facing delays in delivery as their contractor, who was already on site, has gone into administration.
- All joint beneficiaries have emphasised the importance of partnership working in the shaping, design and delivery of projects. However, a number of joint beneficiaries expressed the challenges involved in securing consensus particularly when this has involved community engagement.
- Some joint beneficiaries expressed concern that the initial design and development of project plans ahead of approvals takes place at their own risk

this militates against private and third sector organisations, compared with the public sector. This is in contrast to other funding programmes (where development phase funding is available). However, the award of Targeted Match Funding to the majority of projects (11 out of 13) has enabled joint beneficiaries to fund essential project design and development pre-construction.

- 4.20 Although still at a relatively early stage in terms of the number of projects that have completed, the TAD operation is making reasonable progress towards delivering its targeted indicators. Project progress to date can be seen as positive, given some of the challenges involved in delivery. However, some operation risks still remain, for example with regards to procurement, unconfirmed match funding, overspend and reliance on third parties' spend and delivery. Joint Beneficiaries are confident in addressing these issues and completing within the operation timeframe.
- 4.21 Despite changes to individual projects in terms of content and spend profiles, none of the joint beneficiaries have amended their original Business Plans to reflect changes to design, delivery and financing. The Business Plans therefore do not accurately reflect changes that have taken place (which have been agreed with Visit Wales through, for example, Progress Reports and Quarterly Returns) however these revisions and amendments to relevant targets have been recorded in monitoring reports and in communication between joint beneficiaries, Visit Wales and WEFO. Joint Beneficiaries may want to consider up-dating Business Plans to reflect changes. This would benefit the final evaluation in terms of providing an up-to-date, accurate representation of the individual projects.

Initial results from the TAD operation

- 4.22 As noted above TAD aims to support the ERDF programme objectives by increasing employment through targeted investment in regional tourism infrastructure. It is difficult at this stage to measure, or draw initial conclusions on, the operation's success relative to its key strategic aim or indeed its impact in delivering transformational change for the Welsh visitor economy.

4.23 In addition to meeting WEFO outputs, the projects aim to generate ancillary economic benefits for the wider destination and region. Although the focus is on economic outcomes, specifically to increase employment through investments in prioritised or regional infrastructure support, discussions with joint beneficiaries indicate that TAD investment is making a positive contribution to broader regeneration objectives. Discussions have indicated a number of areas of added value where TAD investment is beginning to make a positive contribution to broader regeneration objectives.

Adding value to local regeneration

4.24 A common theme from joint beneficiaries has been the (continuing) impact of TAD delivery on local regeneration and in tackling some of the broader social and economic problems experienced in some of Wales' more deprived communities. The focus of capital investment to improve and enhance the visitor experience is making a positive contribution to other objectives.

4.25 Investment at Colwyn Bay waterfront is securing the long-term protection of Colwyn Bay including offering a modern, sustainable and attractive public realm to draw new visitors to the area. Similarly, investment at Saundersfoot has "primed regeneration for the area" through establishing a new water activity venues and family activity facilities that complement and strengthen the town's current leisure and commercial maritime operation.

4.26 Importantly for Visit Wales, the leverage and added value that the operation generates for the tourism sector in Wales is significant: the operation equates to £62m investment from only £4m Visit Wales core funding, providing an unique opportunity to support local regeneration priorities through substantial investments.

Changing profile, perception and place identity

4.27 The TAD operation is having a positive impact on raising the profile of destinations and in attracting private sector investment interest. For example, partner beneficiaries in Caernarfon collect visitor data demonstrating that the profile

generated by Galeri is leading to an increase in new visitors to the destination as well as a shift in usage of the facility towards a year-round attraction.

- 4.28 Project representatives and staff report that investment at Rock UK is challenging (and indeed changing) the local and national perceptions of Merthyr Tydfil as a destination for adventure and activity tourism. This is supported by feedback collected by visitors to the site.

Influencing investment

- 4.29 Private sector investment is an essential component in the effective delivery of regeneration and is a central theme in government policy. There are already examples where TAD investment and delivery is attracting investment. Improvements and enhancements to Porthcawl seafront and promenade is leading to an up-lift in investor interest in a number of 'big ticket' development opportunities in the resort. The 'meanwhile uses' secured for Rest Bay and the Harbour Kiosk is demonstrating change, which, it is hoped will lead to significant transformation on some of the larger regeneration sites in the town over the next 5-10 years.

Partnership working and leadership

- 4.30 The TAD Operation has acted as a catalyst for improving partnership working and leadership across the tourism sector. Overall, the TAD Operation has made a positive contribution to collaboration, bringing partners together.
- 4.31 Joint beneficiaries and wide stakeholders report that collaboration between a range of partners has been effective and has helped generate consensus and buy-in around the design, development and delivery of projects. This is specifically the case in terms of projects that have a 'package' of projects, for example the Adventure Triangle (Brecon Monmouthshire Canal). However, effective partnership working is seen as being resource intensive.
- 4.32 Bringing joint beneficiaries together through workshops from the start of the operation has been helpful. There is consensus that the Steering Group works well to support projects, providing a platform to exchange good practice and ideas. However, joint beneficiaries report that the group could be more dynamic in generating knowledge transfer, for example through more advanced projects providing one-to-one advice or (informal) mentoring to projects that are still working their way through issues that others have overcome.

5. Integration of cross-cutting themes and the Welsh language in the operation

- 5.1 The TAD Operation is required to integrate the ERDF 2014-2020 cross cutting themes (CCTs) in its operation. The cross-cutting themes are:
- Equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming;
 - Sustainable development, and
 - Tackling poverty and social exclusion.
- 5.2 The Welsh Government's ambition is for the tourism sector to grow in a sustainable way and to make an increasing contribution to the economic, social and environmental well-being of communities within the operation area. The TAD operation is made up of a number of wide-ranging projects, which covers multiple areas of potential environmental impact, equal opportunity and gender mainstreaming, and tackling poverty and social exclusion. A key emphasis for joint beneficiaries has been to ensure that cross-cutting themes are embedded in project development, appraisal and monitoring from the outset.
- 5.3 The Visit Wales TAD operation includes a monitoring analyst, who is responsible for managing and monitoring the 13 TAD projects' progress in a coordinated manner. The role provides central support to all sites and activities to ensure that projects are managed and monitored appropriately to enable an assessment of economic and environmental impacts.
- 5.4 The critical test of the effectiveness of the TAD operation approach to CCTs is the extent to which they have been embedded in the thirteen projects. Our initial project review has revealed a mixed picture in terms of the extent to which CCTs have been embedded in the design, delivery and monitoring of project activity. Responding to and addressing cross-cutting themes are not new activities and, in many instances, align closely with existing strategies, policy objectives and programme delivery. This is particularly the case where projects are led by local authorities, where there seems to be an effective integration of CCT in project design and development and the appraisal process. Indeed, the increasing importance and emphasis of the Well-being of Future Generations Act as a framework for public bodies for long term actions has meant integration of CCTs in

project development and delivery. All partners have submitted information on how their project activity will actively contribute to the goals for Sustainable Development set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

- 5.5 At this stage, the delivery timeframe makes it difficult to quantify the impact of CCT integration. Some of the key points to emerge from the review are as follows:

Equal opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming

- 5.6 The requirement to ensure that all destinations and attractions need to be accessible to all regardless of physical disability, sensory impairment, learning disability, mental health problem or any other impairment to help ensure that all visitors enjoy a quality experience is a core element for all the projects. For example, accessibility to Colwyn Bay waterfront is a key element and access ramps have been provided to the beach. The project is also promoting and encouraging night-time use by improving safety, for example lighting, changing areas prone to anti-social behaviour.
- 5.7 Wherever possible, new capital build projects are planning over and above the requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to ensure that venues, car parks, toilets, attractions, cycle paths, walkways and visitor centres are accessible and can be utilised by disabled people. For example, design plans for the Porthcawl Maritime Centre will incorporate good practice in this area and incorporate soft lighting, accessible signage, and accessible colour schemes.
- 5.8 The tourism sector employs a higher proportion of younger people (16-24) than the other priority sectors identified by the Welsh Government.¹⁶ The Vale of Rheidol is committed to working with schools and colleges to develop the skills it requires. The Vale of Rheidol has a track record in providing opportunities and placements for people who have suffered discrimination or mental health issues.

¹⁶ The priority sectors are: Tourism, Advanced materials & manufacturing, Construction, Creative industries, Energy & environment, Food & farming, Financial & professional services, ICT, Life sciences.

Sustainable development

- 5.9 For capital projects, the sustainable development CCT has had a clear impact on design. The view was consistently expressed that sustainable principles are an integral part of build design. In a number of instances, projects are looking to achieve the highest excellence awards in terms of construction and operation. This has certainly been a core principle for the Colwyn Bay Waterfront, which was awarded an ICE Wales Cymru Award in recognition of outstanding engineering achievement.
- 5.10 Sustainable procurement is also a factor in promoting inclusive and local sustainable economic growth. A number of joint beneficiaries are actively trying to make use of local businesses wherever possible, as part of their community benefits approach, to help sustain the local economy.

Tackling poverty and social exclusion

- 5.11 The operation will actively seek to address poverty through focusing on the creation of direct jobs, both permanent and temporary, for those who are out of work and through strengthening the conditions that will enable businesses to create jobs. The importance of employment, even if low paid, for avoiding deep/persistent poverty and promoting well-being is well-established. The Welsh Government's strategy *Prosperity for All* provides a framework for a whole-government approach to increase prosperity and address the root causes of poverty in an effective, joined-up way. It puts forward strong evidence that employment offers a high level of protection against poverty for individuals and families and recognising that the best route out of poverty is through employment.
- 5.12 Examples of interventions that address access to employment include:
- Caernarfon Castle is connecting with local employability projects as well as introducing social clauses during the construction phases to provide apprenticeship opportunities and work placements with local further education colleges.
 - The Vale of Rheidol railway has previous experience of engaging with government agencies to help with the back to work programme. They have offered opportunities to many long term unemployed and disadvantaged

individuals to learn skills and gain confidence to enable them to start working either for the first time or to re-join the workforce.

- Investment in year-round all-weather facilities will help extend the tourism season, leading to improved employment opportunities through the provision of more full time, year-round positions. The Heritage Railway is addressing this by providing a year-round salary, to help local people get out of the poverty trap.

Welsh language

5.13 The TAD Business Plan sets out a commitment that the operation will contribute to the Welsh Government's aims to support the Welsh language. The Business Plans commits to doing this by increasing 'the use of Welsh by participants', leading to 'increased provision of services', 'improved Welsh language skills' and 'enhanced economic opportunities in Welsh-speaking areas'. Since the TAD Business Plan was finalised, the strategic context has moved on with the publication of the Welsh Government's strategy for the promotion and facilitation of the use of the Welsh language *Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers* (2017).¹⁷ *Cymraeg 2050* sets out the Welsh Government's long-term approach to achieving the target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050 by:

- (i) Increasing the number of Welsh speakers
- (ii) Increasing the use of Welsh and
- (iii) Creating favourable conditions for the use of the Welsh language through infrastructure and context.

5.14 The 2017 strategy is ambitious in its vision and encourages a proactive approach across all sectors to enable the language to be used more extensively and for the number who speak it to grow. It refers to the opportunities in specific sectors and notes that in tourism the language can be 'an integral part of provision'.

'The Welsh language can also enhance a sense of place and many brands already use it as a unique selling point.' (*Cymraeg 2050*)

¹⁷ [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#)

- 5.15 Fieldwork with joint beneficiaries explored the ways in which projects have used the Welsh language. Many projects referred to the fact that the language was being used as part of physical infrastructure – i.e. through signage and in how sites are named. Others noted that information boards were being developed bilingually, ensuring that the language is given prominence and is drawn to the attention of visitors.
- 5.16 Joint beneficiaries explained that in many ways this represented a continuation of established practice. *“Through our Welsh language policy as an organisation, promoting the language is tied into all contracts we let out. In the case of TAD, public consultation was bilingual, and the contractor was required to have a bilingual public liaison officer in place to be able to work with the public in Welsh and in English.”*
- 5.17 In some cases, joint beneficiaries reported that they had recruited or intended to recruit Welsh speakers in public facing roles (ticket offices, reception areas, information desks) in order to *‘provide bilingual customer experiences for local people’*. Others recognised the value of ensuring that visitors from outside Wales hear the language and appreciate that they are in a different country and culture, echoing the point about promoting a ‘sense of place’ in *Cymraeg 2050*.
- 5.18 A number of joint beneficiaries expressed their commitment to providing bilingual services but reflected on the difficulties experienced in recruiting Welsh speaking staff to posts. One project representative noted: *‘It is still challenging to employ local Welsh speakers as many tend to move away. We are trying to offer good employment opportunities to keep young Welsh speakers in the area and (TAD) is supporting this.’* Others also commented on the wider economic benefits of the operation, noting that the investment is supporting local businesses, suppliers and, through employment opportunities, encouraging people to stay in the area, including in communities with a high proportion of Welsh speakers.
- 5.19 There is emerging evidence, therefore, of the operation’s contribution to the aims of *Cymraeg 2050*. There may be scope for projects to demonstrate more proactive behaviours to support the language, particularly as increasing numbers of projects become operational. In some cases, project representatives mentioned being ‘compliant’ with internal Welsh language policies or requirements. For example,

there was little unprompted reference to developing the Welsh language skills of the existing workforce in order to increase the use of Welsh. This may reflect a lack of awareness of provision to support skills. It also underlines a point in *Cymraeg 2050* about the need for a 'culture shift' among organisations of all sizes and in all sectors to move from compliance with policies and legislation to a recognition of the benefits that a bilingual workforce can contribute to their organisations and the wider economy. These benefits include the ability to offer bilingual services and experiences to visitors or customers. TAD projects referred to the importance of being able to serve local visitors in their language of choice and the cultural value by providing visitors from further afield with an insight into Welsh culture and heritage by ensuring they are able to experience the language.

6. Marketing

Background

- 6.1 The funding available through the TAD operation is primarily focused on capital investment. The governance of the operation has been designed to deliver secondary impact gains in terms of mutual support, best practice learning and sharing experiences between joint beneficiaries and of course individual funding awards were made on the basis of 'strategic fit' with the wider Wales tourism strategy. None of these in themselves however guarantee a coherent presentation of the operation to Wales' visitors – any 'transformation' will be achieved because the projects collectively drive visitor income growth and levels of consumer desire and demand for, and satisfaction with, Wales - it is at this point that employment and sustainability outcomes start to be realised beyond any initial construction phase.. It is a truism that the capital investment must therefore be supported by marketing and communications activity for the TAD operation to meet its overall targets.
- 6.2 Of course, the prime responsibility for marketing the individual TAD sites and destinations remains with the joint beneficiaries themselves. Accordingly some TAD joint beneficiaries originally identified specific but relatively small allocations for marketing within their own individual draft business plans, before a more strategic and coordinated approach was confirmed.
- 6.3 To this end Visit Wales secured a revenue allocation of £2.4m within the overall TAD operation for marketing. Visit Wales plans to deploy £2m of this alongside and in addition to its core-funded brand and marketing campaign spend on TV, online and through the travel trade. This will identify those TAD projects ready to receive visitors as lead products in the Year(s) of the Outdoors 2020/21 and beyond, as well as featuring on the Wales Way¹⁸ route-based initiative – these are both key elements of the 'This is Wales/ Gwlad Gwlad' brand which has been fully rolled out since the TAD operation was first devised.
- 6.4 The above approach is similar to that taken in the last E4G programme but one clear learning from that, taken by Visit Wales, was the need to ensure individual

¹⁸ All TAD projects can legitimately be linked to one of the three initial 'Wales Way' routes, which are an important mechanism for giving confidence to first-time and overseas visitors to Wales. See Annex 3.

joint beneficiaries maintained an active stake in the collective marketing as well as the development of their projects. There is therefore £25k-£30k available per project which will be subject to 'competitive' marketing plans coming forward. The guidelines for this allocation process are currently under development and will be issued to joint beneficiaries shortly. In addition Visit Wales will employ a member of staff based in its marketing team to provide support to joint beneficiaries on marketing delivery and provide a strategic link between local and national activities. This closer liaison should also alleviate the frustration mentioned by some joint beneficiaries that Visit Wales does not use the content joint beneficiaries provide for wider distribution through its online channels.

6.5 The individual sums to be allocated to joint beneficiaries for marketing are deliberately not large so as to:

- Discourage the budget being used to fund staff (or subsidise existing overheads)
- Encourage joint beneficiaries to explore opportunities to collaborate on marketing activity, promoting links between sites and destinations
- 'Nudge' joint beneficiaries towards lower-cost online activities.

6.6 The overall campaign effectiveness will be measured through Visit Wales' commissioned intercept marketing evaluation that gauges marketing impacts in terms of the customer journey e.g.:

- Promotional activity reach and engagement levels
- Campaign recall
- Destination awareness, likelihood to visit and Brand search
- Additional value, return on investment (ROI) and jobs supported.¹⁹

¹⁹ As an example of the effectiveness of online marketing evaluation of VW's social media activity during the 'Partnership for Growth' strategy' period shows a 7 per cent increase in visitor economy employment and an additional £150m in tourism value stimulated by VW since 2012.

7. Interim conclusions and recommendations

Summary conclusion

- 7.1 Section 1.7 set out four overarching questions that we have sought to answer in this interim evaluation report. We provide a summary response to these questions in this section.

What progress has there been to date in delivering the TAD operation?

- 7.2 The delays in delivery outlined in earlier sections of this report, along with incomplete baseline data, present challenges in assessing and quantifying outcomes at this interim stage of the evaluation of the TAD operation. Project-level outcomes will be presented at different points in time, potentially making it difficult to analyse and arrive at an aggregated operation-wide evaluation of key outcome measures and wider benefits.

- 7.3 This being said, at this interim stage there is no case to recommend any significant or substantive changes to the investment approach, allocations or indeed to overall operation management. The TAD operation is making good progress to date given the challenging conditions that joint beneficiaries have faced over the past two years, particularly in relation to finalising plans, securing match funding, and procuring services to progress elements of their projects and capacity.

What, if any, gaps are there in the data or intelligence in order to be able to assess the TAD operation against the evaluation objectives?

- 7.4 Monitoring arrangements are in place to collect data against the WEFO indicators. In addition, most projects appear to have data to be able to demonstrate changes in visitor numbers to sites over time. Joint beneficiaries anticipate that projects will deliver wide-ranging impacts on visitors, sites and the wider community. Data to enable an assessment of these wider impacts is incomplete or, in some cases, largely undeveloped. There is a need for an impact framework that supports joint beneficiaries in capturing the effects on visitor perceptions in addition to wider community and economic benefits that arise from TAD funding.

Are there any challenges associated with being able to fulfil the evaluation objectives?

- 7.5 The evaluation objectives are achievable, provided that a sufficient number of projects are able to share robust output and outcome data to enable an operation-wide assessment at the final evaluation stage. There are challenges and caveats to be recorded, however: aggregating data in order to draw collective conclusions about the operation's impact presents difficulties, due to the diverse nature of projects and the different timescales for completion.

What are the learning points for the current and future tourism-related operations?

- 7.6 It remains early to draw definitive conclusions on the longer term learning points. However, based on the experiences of completed projects, there are indications that significant investment in a small number of destinations will enhance the tourism product, attract new visitors and serve as a catalyst for other tourism-related and economic activity.

- 7.7 Following the interim review and project assessment, we set out below our interim conclusions together with suggested recommendations for consideration by Visit Wales and joint beneficiaries.

Interim conclusions

The TAD operation has a clear rationale, which complements Welsh Government policies to support the sector.

- 7.8 There is support among stakeholders and joint beneficiaries for the operation's rationale and its aspiration to develop high-profile destinations and attractions across Wales. The significant investment in a small number of destinations will enhance the tourism product, attract new visitors and also serve as a catalyst for other tourism-related and economic activity in their local areas and regions.
- 7.9 The TAD operation was designed to be an integral part of a package of tourism funding to grow the sector, develop the product and increase tourism earnings. The scale of investment in a small number of regionally-prioritised tourism sites differentiates the fund from other investment funds such as the Tourism Investment Support Scheme, Wales Tourism Investment Fund and Micro Small Business Fund.

There is continued support for such an investment lever to support delivery of world-class products which respond to consumer needs and market opportunities.

The TAD operation is well aligned with the aims of the West Wales and the Valleys ERDF Programme and with wider Welsh Government policies and priorities.

- 7.10 TAD supports ERDF objectives under Priority 4.4, which aims to increase employment through investments in prioritised or regional infrastructure. There is early evidence of TAD's contribution in terms of accommodating and creating employment, albeit only a partial picture at this stage. Tourism is a priority sector of the foundational economy in Wales and TAD will help raise the profile of the sector and enhance the visitor offer. Individual project business plans set out how they will contribute to the sustainable development goals set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Ongoing work during the evaluation will consider how these contributions are recorded and measured.

Recommendation: Consider how to apply TAD model as a continued investment lever to accelerate growth and develop world-class, quality, authentic visitor experiences within the developing Visit Wales national tourism strategy.

Visit Wales has provided effective management of the TAD operation to date

- 7.11 Based on evidence collected during primary research with joint beneficiaries and stakeholders, and drawing on samples of monitoring data, the operational management of TAD has been effective. A supportive and collaborative approach has been adopted by Visit Wales who have shown with a willingness to make improvements and learn lessons as the operation progresses. Close working partnerships with joint beneficiaries has been a feature of the operation. The operation has not been without its challenges. Some projects expressed frustration at delays in finalising plans and launch dates, however they valued the role of Visit Wales as an intermediary in working through issues raised. Visit Wales' working relationship with WEFO is also key and they have been an efficient conduit of information between WEFO and joint beneficiaries during what is a complex and multi-faceted operation. Visit Wales has also played a pastoral role in working with joint beneficiaries by supporting the finalisation of business plans, guiding them through some of the administrative processes and providing ongoing advice and

support. There is consensus that the TAD network which meets quarterly works well, providing a platform to exchange good practice and ideas. There is a general feeling that the group could be more dynamic in terms of facilitating knowledge exchange and good practice amongst partners.

- 7.12 Effective systems and processes have been developed and improved, building on past ERDF Programmes. Our review has found little evidence to suggest any significant problems with the way that Visit Wales / WEFO has handled projects. Clearly, there are challenges ahead for management and implementation (specifically in relation to addressing potential delays to project delivery and defining marketing arrangements) but the Visit Wales team recognises the operation risks and the need for early action to prepare itself during the delivery phase.

Recommendation: Ensure that sufficient capacity is retained within the Visit Wales team to manage and support TAD projects as they move towards operational phases.

Recommendation: Consider whether greater use could be made of the knowledge across the TAD network to promote knowledge transfer. Explore whether projects that are further advanced or operational could provide one-to-one advice or mentoring to projects facing challenges or issues that others may have also encountered and overcome. Although this may already be happening informally, it could be promoted more actively during network meetings.

There is a need for a more robust and more standardised approach to data collection in respect of non-WEFO operational indicators

- 7.13 The TAD operation selected a limited number of core WEFO performance indicators and an additional target for increased visitor numbers to TAD sites. Combined, the individual TAD project business plans aim to increase visitor numbers by 410,839. Joint beneficiaries are required to report on achievement against their project-level visitor numbers after project completion however this is not an indicator required by WEFO. While in some cases individual project business plans include other performance indicators, these are not monitored and subsequently data on these additional targets is not being collected in all cases. TAD projects will undoubtedly give rise to a wider range of additional positive

outcomes, including perceptions of sites, social and community benefits, direct and indirect economic effects. Initial examples of wider positive effects have been shared with the evaluation team. The examples are valuable but need to be supported by more robust data. The lack of systematic approaches to capturing these effects may result in projects providing narrative but without evaluative data – at project level – to support these important other outcomes. As has been outlined in previous sections of the report, the overall objective is to deliver transformational change for the Welsh visitor economy. However, current monitoring data will make it difficult to assess whether TAD operation will achieve this. Linked to this, there appears to be a lack of clarity among a number of joint beneficiaries about what is required or expected in terms of project-level evaluation.

Recommendation: Consider the development of a wider impact framework that supports joint beneficiaries in capturing effects of visitor perceptions in addition to wider community and economic benefits that arise from TAD funding.

Recommendation: Within this framework, a secondary recommendation that all TAD sites collect data using the Wales Visitor Survey questionnaire so that data on visitor experiences and perceptions is collected in a consistent format and fed into the evaluation.

There is scope to improve linkages with other local and regional activities and programmes.

- 7.14 The ERDF Operational Programme emphasises the need for funded operations to support an integrated approach and to contribute to wider issues of low skills and economic activity. In the case of Specific Objective 4.4, this will be measured against the claimant count rate in travel-to-work areas. There is a question about whether projects – as they mature – could do more to explore and strengthen links with local skills and regeneration programmes.

Recommendation: Joint beneficiaries and partner beneficiaries should consider how, as their projects complete and become operational, partnerships and links could be made with local regeneration activities and programmes. This is particularly applicable to those projects with a focus on employment and skills.

The TAD operation has systems in place to ensure that the cross-cutting themes are embedded as part of the intervention, however at an individual project level cross-cutting themes and the Welsh language could be promoted and publicised more actively.

- 7.15 There is evidence that the TAD operation has adequate measures to address cross-cutting themes to promote equal opportunities, sustainable development and tackle poverty. Our initial project review has revealed a mixed picture in terms of the extent to which CCTs have been embedded in the design, delivery and monitoring of project activity. The integration of cross cutting themes is evident in project design and implementation supported by a monitoring and reporting framework.
- 7.16 While the TAD operation identifies a set of proposed monitoring indicators, some joint beneficiaries reported a lack of clarity about the quantitative targets for CCTs and their importance to the overall operation. The review has also identified areas of good practice by joint beneficiaries but there is a need to ensure that these areas are promoted and publicised for application by other partners.

Recommendation: Visit Wales and joint beneficiaries should consider whether there is scope for more active engagement with under-represented groups or harder-to-reach communities through the work of their projects.

Stakeholders report that there is relatively little awareness of the TAD operation beyond those who have been directly involved in its delivery.

- 7.17 Plans to support the marketing of TAD projects have only recently been set out. As part of this there is a need to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach to marketing individual sites and their value through having been part of a collective and Wales-wide operation to promote high-quality destinations.

Recommendation: Visit Wales should ensure that TAD projects are promoted prominently as part of national campaigns and initiatives, with particularly opportunities presented through the Year of the Outdoors 2020/21 and the Wales Way routes.

Recommendation: Joint beneficiaries should be encouraged to explore joint marketing opportunities where this is feasible. Proposed visitor itineraries incorporating different TAD sites could be explored, taking a themed approach or focused on geographic proximity.

There have been substantial changes to some project specifications, plans and financial profiles since original joint beneficiary business plans were approved.

- 7.18 These revisions and amendments to relevant targets have been recorded in monitoring reports and in communication between joint beneficiaries, Visit Wales and WEFO. There is a need to ensure that the evaluation takes into account these revised plans and targets so that the operation is assessed against final agreed plans (and targets).

Through its funding arrangements the operation is less attractive to private sector or third sector organisations than it is to larger public sector organisations.

- 7.19 A number of joint beneficiaries reported serious concerns relating to cashflow, particularly during early stages of development and prior to projects receiving final approval. This has led to comments that the model employed through TAD works for many public sector organisations where cashflow concerns can be managed but is less attractive (or indeed feasible) for third sector or private sector organisations. A consequence is that the operation is heavily weighted towards projects led and delivered by public sector organisations. Should there be a desire in future to diversify the profile of organisations supported through similar funding programmes, it may be advantageous to make available some initial development funding to cover expenditure during initial planning phases.

Forward look

The next steps for the evaluation, along with broad timescales are set out below. These require some adaptation to the original methodology, which will be confirmed with the Evaluation Steering Group.

Table 7.1 Next steps in the evaluation

Task	Indicative timescale
Agree impact framework for wider TAD impacts, prioritising areas as necessary.	September-October 2019
Identify which impacts can be evidenced through existing monitoring and data collection arrangements.	September-October 2019
Develop / advise JB's on other data collection tools that could be used to fill gaps ahead of final round of field work in 2020.	October 2019 - January 2020
Final evaluation inception meeting with Evaluation Steering Group	June 2020
Ongoing reviews of operation monitoring reports	Throughout
Final fieldwork with joint beneficiaries and stakeholders	September-November 2020
Draft final evaluation report	January 2021
Final evaluation report	March 2021

References

Munday, M., Jones, C. and Roche, N. (Welsh Economy Research Unit) (2016) *The Economic Impact of the Environment for Growth (E4G) Programme*

Welsh Government (2013a) *Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework*

Welsh Government (2013b) *The Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020: Partnership for Growth*

Welsh Government (2013c) *Vibrant and Viable Places: Framework*

Welsh Government (2014a) *Operational Programme West Wales and the Valleys: European Regional Development Fund*

Welsh Government (2014b) *EU Structural Funds programmes 2014 to 2020: Operational Programmes*

Welsh Government (2016a) *Partnership for Growth: Strategy for Tourism 2013-2020: Strategy Progress Review*

Welsh Government (2016b) *Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS): Guidance Note*

Welsh Government (2017) *Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers*

Welsh Government (2018) *Great Britain Tourism Survey: 2017*

Welsh Government (2019) *Wales tourism performance: January to March 2019*

Legislation

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015.](#)

Other non-published documentation reviewed

Visit Wales (June 2016), Tourism Attractor Destinations Business Plan (Version 6)

Individual joint beneficiary business plans

Operation monitoring information: quarterly monitoring forms and output data from completed projects provided by Visit Wales

Annex A: Interim evaluation research tools

INTERIM EVALUATION: INTERVIEWS WITH JOINT BENEFICIARIES AND LOCAL DELIVERY PARTNERS

A. INTRODUCTION

- Explain that the interview forms part of the interim evaluation phase and will feed into a report to be presented to WG in June 2019.
- The interim evaluation report will provide an initial assessment of TAD operational delivery, including sections dedicated to:
 - the policy and strategic context within which the operation sits;
 - overall Operation design and management;
 - delivery and scrutiny arrangements;
 - and Project-specific delivery, drawing on the available baseline data at Joint Beneficiary level.
- The study is an evaluation of the operation as a whole and not individual projects.
- Explain timetable for the evaluation – it will run in parallel with operation delivery and a final evaluation report will be presented in early 2021.
- Remind that they may undertake the interview in Welsh if they wish to do so.

All data gathered through this evaluation will be held in an anonymised format. It will not contain your contact details and any identifiable information will be removed. Arad Research will use the data to produce a report for the Welsh Government. This report will not include any information that could be used to identify individual participants. Further information about privacy and how we use your data is available in the privacy notice (researcher to ensure copy is made available).

B. PROGRESS IN DELIVERING THE PROJECT

2. Please provide an update on your Project, noting key developments over the past 6 months.
 - What are your Project's key achievements / outputs to date?
 - What are the main milestones for your Project over the coming year?
 - Have there been any significant amendments to your project Business Plan?
 - Is the Project being delivered as intended? If not, what changes have been agreed and what was the rationale for these changes?
3. Have you encountered any challenges in delivering the Project?
 - If so, what has been the nature of these challenges?
 - Have they been Project-related challenges or linked to the TAD operation more widely?
4. How effective has the joint-working with partner beneficiaries / other delivery partners been to date?
 - What has worked well in securing local engagement among other stakeholders, businesses, the public? Have you encountered any barriers?

5. [Q for delivery partners/partner beneficiaries where appropriate] What has been your involvement in supporting Project delivery?
- Was your involvement planned from Project inception?
 - Have you been involved as originally planned?
 - What has worked well in terms of joint-working through the Project? Have you encountered any challenges?

C. ANTICIPATED IMPACTS AND PROJECT-LEVEL INTELLIGENCE

6. What do you anticipate the impact of your Project will be?
- What would success look like?
 - What impacts do you anticipate the Project will have?
 - Onsite? On your organisation?
 - On other delivery partners?
 - On the visitor experience and tourism offer at your destination?
 - On the local community?
 - On local businesses?
 - On employment in the local area?

[Where data has been shared in advance, interviewer to thank JB for sharing data and discuss specific issues arising.]

7. The TAD operation supports the ERDF objectives under Priority 4.4, which is to increase employment through investments in prioritised or regional infrastructure. To what extent is the focus on increasing employment a focal point of your Project?
- Please explain how the design of your Project reflects this the Strategic Objective to increase employment in prioritised regional infrastructure.
8. The WEFO performance indicators for the operation are: Land Developed; Premises Created; Jobs Accommodated; SMEs Accommodated.
- What are your views on the suitability of these indicators for this operation?
9. Do the data collection arrangements you have in place enable you to measure progress against Project objectives effectively?
- Are there any gaps in data you are aware of?
 - What are the issues and challenges in collected data?
10. Has the Project been able to spend in line with original expectations?
- If there have been delays, what factors have impacted on these delays in spending?
 - If applicable, which elements of Project spend have been delayed (Capital / Revenue)?
 - What impact, if any, has this had on overall Project delivery?
11. What is the likelihood that the Project would have been realised without the ERDF funding?
- Would the scale of the Project have differed?
 - What challenges would you have faced in delivering the work without ERDF funding?

D. OPERATION AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

12. What are your views on TAD operation management?
- Specifically, do you have any additional views on the roles of VW / WEFO in supporting operation management and scrutiny?

E. REVIEW, SUPPORT AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

13. What are your views on the arrangements in place at operation level to review progress?
- How effective are the monitoring processes put in place?
 - Do you find it sufficiently easy to collect monitoring data (has enough support been provided)?
14. How effective is the support that is in place for your Project from the wider VW operation team?
- Are there any particular elements of the support which have been particularly helpful, or less helpful?
 - Is there sufficient challenge and scrutiny in place?

F. STRATEGIC FIT

15. What are your thoughts on how the operation more generally and your Project specifically is aligned with wider priorities to and develop the visitor economy?
- What do you understand to be the key priorities in your region and nationally?
 - Does your Project complement or align with other programmes and funding streams? If so, how?
16. Have there been any changes to the policy or strategic context that have impacted on the delivery of your Project? If so, how?

G. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

17. How is the Project incorporating the following cross-cutting themes into its delivery:
- equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming;
 - sustainable development; and
 - tackling poverty and social exclusion?
18. Are these activities new?
- I.e. to what extent has the TAD operation been a driver for your Project/organisation to increase or enhance its work in relation to the areas covered by the cross-cutting themes?
19. Have you encountered any challenges in supporting or incorporating cross-cutting themes into your project?

H. WELSH LANGUAGE

20. To what extent has your Project delivered activities in support of the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy?
- How is this monitored and reported on an ongoing basis?

I. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT: MOVING FORWARD

21. Looking ahead over the next 6-12 months, what are the priorities for the Project?
22. How are you planning to market the developments? What would be the most important marketing approaches to focus on?

23. Are there any areas where operation or project delivery can be improved? If so, do you require any additional support or guidance to enable these improvements?

INTERIM EVALUATION INTERVIEWS WITH WELSH GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES AND OTHER STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDERS

A. INTRODUCTION

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 - overall Operation design and management;
 - delivery and scrutiny arrangements;
 - and Project-specific delivery, drawing on the available baseline data at Joint Beneficiary level.
- An evaluation of the operation as a whole and not individual projects.
- Explain timetable for the evaluation – it will run in parallel with “operation” delivery and a final evaluation report will be presented in early 2021.
- Remind that they may undertake the interview in Welsh if they wish to do so.

All data gathered through this evaluation will be held in an anonymised format. It will not contain your contact details and any identifiable information will be removed. Arad Research will use the data to produce a report for the Welsh Government. This report will not include any information that could be used to identify individual participants. Further information about privacy and how we use your data is available in the privacy notice (researcher to ensure copy is made available).

B. TAD PROGRAMME CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

2. What was the policy context at the time the TAD operation was initially designed and developed?
 - What were the opportunities and challenges facing the Welsh tourism sector?
 - How has the context changed since then?
3. What was the rationale for the TAD operation?
 - What was the operation intended to achieve? To what extent does the operation address the key challenges facing the Welsh tourism industry?
 - How clearly were operation aims communicated among the various strategic and delivery partners?
 - The TAD operation supports the ERDF objectives under Priority 4.4, which is to increase employment through investments in prioritised or regional infrastructure. To what extent is the focus on increasing employment a focal point of the operation and the individual projects supported?
 - TAD aims to deliver ‘transformational change’ in the Welsh tourism offer. What do you understand this to mean? I.e. what would ‘transformational change’ look like?
 - To what extent are there clear links between the aim of the operation (i.e. to support strategic, regionally prioritised tourism Projects that will raise the quality and

perception of destinations in Wales) and the ERDF Strategic Objectives which the operation is expected to contribute towards?

4. Where does the TAD operation sit in the context of other programmes of support and strategies to support tourism in Wales?
 - What is your view on the strategic alignment of the operation in relation to a) key Welsh Government policies and b) the Wales ERDF Programme more generally?
 - To what extent does TAD add value to other programmes? In what way(s) is the TAD operation unique? What does TAD deliver – in a strategic context – that is unique or different to other initiatives in the tourism sector in Wales?

C. PROGRAMME DESIGN

5. What are your views on the overall operation aim?
 - How will the range of projects funded through the TAD operation support this aim?
6. What is the rationale for investing in large scale sites, as opposed to smaller more focused interventions?
7. To what extent do the funded projects collectively support the wider Visit Wales and Welsh Government priorities for the sector?
8. Does the TAD operation complement and contribute towards wider Welsh Government strategies?
 - Specifically, does it contribute towards Prosperity for All and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act? If so, how?

D. OPERATION MANAGEMENT

9. [If applicable] What is your role in operation management?
10. What is your view on the effectiveness of operation management arrangements?
 - What has worked well in your experience?
 - Are there any aspects of operation management you think could be improved?
 - How effectively have joint beneficiaries been managed and supported in order to ensure that the commitments set out in business plans are being met?
11. Do you play a role in the monitoring and scrutiny of operation outcomes? If so, what is your role and how does this feed into ongoing operation delivery?

E. MARKETING

12. What approach is being taken to market the operation – or support the marketing of individual projects?
- Have any marketing activities been undertaken to date? If so, what has worked well? What could be improved?
 - What are the future plans for marketing? How effectively are discussions progressing and what are the key marketing approaches being considered?

F. ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION WITH JOINT BENEFICIARIES [WHERE RELEVANT TO INTERVIEWEES]

13. What are your views on the approaches to engaging and communication with joint beneficiaries during the operation to date?
- What has worked well?
 - Are there any ways in which the collaboration and communication with joint beneficiaries and other partners could be improved?
14. What in your view are the ongoing challenges that joint beneficiaries may face?

G. CAPTURING OPERATION OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

15. The WEFO performance indicators for the operation are: *Land Developed; Premises Created; Jobs Accommodated; SMEs Accommodated*.
What are your views on the suitability of these indicators for this operation?
- Had these operation indicators been shared with you? Were you aware of them previously?
16. What are the wider outcomes that you hope / expect to see through the TAD operation?
17. What existing data can support the evaluation?

H. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

18. Please outline how the operation is addressing the ERDF cross-cutting theme of equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming.
- What consideration has been given to equal opportunities for disabled people, including accessibility?
 - What consideration has been given to providing support (particularly employment) to protected groups, such as women and young people?

19. Please outline how the operation is addressing the ERDF cross-cutting theme of sustainable development.

- What consideration has been given to transport issues?
- Has the role of a sustainable development 'champion' been created?
- What consideration has been given to local supply chains / procurement?
- What consideration has been given to energy efficiency?
- What consideration has been given to protected areas?

1.

20. Please outline how the operation is addressing the ERDF cross-cutting theme of tackling poverty and social exclusion.

- What consideration has been given to ensuring access to employment for those in disadvantaged areas or facing barriers to employment?

21. Are joint beneficiaries required to report on their progress and outcomes in incorporating the cross-cutting themes into their project delivery? If so, how?

- What are the success measures linked to cross-cutting themes for the TAD operation?

I. WELSH LANGUAGE

22. How was the Welsh language taken into consideration during operation design?

- To what extent have the TAD projects and the operation as a whole supported the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy so far?
- How is the operation supporting increases in the use of the Welsh language? Is the operation creating favourable conditions to support the use of the Welsh language?
- How is this monitored and reported on an ongoing basis?

J. OTHER QUESTIONS

23. Do you have any questions or issues for the evaluation team?

24. Are there any recent policy or other developments that the evaluation should take into account during the early stages of the research?

Annex B: TAD project summaries

Colwyn Bay Waterfront

Lead: Conwy County Borough Council

The Colwyn Bay Waterfront Strategy is an integral part of the £100m strategic Bay Life Regeneration Programme. The project will realise improvements along a further 980M section of promenade, continuing the improvements from the recently completed Phase 1 of the scheme (funded through Vibrant and Viable Places funding), which included Porth Eirias and the new beach.

This project will provide a new high-quality public realm and introduce new activity and interest points along the promenade west of Phase 1, further enhancing the re-emergence of Colwyn Bay as a key visitor destination in North Wales and providing improved local amenity. Creating an additional kiosk of 100sq^M and space for 3 additional seasonal concessions as part of the scheme will provide additional business and employment opportunities as well as further visitor facilities and increased spend in the locality.



Start date: June 2016
End date: September 2018



Total Project Costs: £3,833,709
TAD/ERDF investment: £1,513,072

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date (provisional data)
Jobs accommodated	-	-
SMEs accommodated	3	4
Land developed	1.5ha	1.5ha
Premises created / refurbished	120m ²	80m ²
Additional indicators		
Additional visitor numbers	15,000	Unknown
Jobs created	6	6

Project progress

The second stage of the Waterfront development (the stage which TAD has funded) has been completed, apart from finalising accounts. Stage 1 (beach and Porth Eirias) was completed in late 2014, so the design for stage 2 started around the same time. The project team went out to public consultation and established design phases with set milestones. A Commercial Feasibility Study was undertaken to identify the best approach to a business space on the promenade. Second year Glyndŵr University students supported the design of the concessions building, with one student's design being commissioned for development. Therefore, the promenade has now been improved, extended, raised, it's safety improved and made more visitor-friendly. This has included the development of a climbing wall, a café and seating. A key element of the project has been to merge tourism and coastal defence approaches. The development of the promenade has had coastal defence as a core consideration e.g. raising the promenade and road and utilising benches as additional sea barriers.

Adventure Welsh Valleys

Lead: Rock UK Adventure Centres Ltd

The project involves the development of a residential adventure climbing regional facility targeting markets across South Wales and the English Midlands situated on the outskirts of Merthyr Tydfil. The project aims to become a regional outdoor activity hub for South East Wales, working in partnership with other stakeholders and activity businesses including Gethin Bike Park and the Brecon Beacons National Park. It involves the extension and refurbishment of the old colliery building, converting it into a modern, welcoming leisure facility – including a new cafe, outdoor play area and additional outdoor activities, with en-suite accommodation for 100 residential guests. The project supports Merthyr Tydfil county borough council's strategic tourism and leisure agenda; "Destination Merthyr".



Start date: October 2016
End date: June 2018



Total Project Costs: £4,738,288
TAD/ERDF investment: £2,543,000

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	55	55
SMEs accommodated	1	1
Land developed	2.4Ha	2.4Ha
Premises created / refurbished	2990m ²	2990m ²
Additional indicators		
Visitor numbers	11,400	Unknown
Visit Wales star grade	4*	Unknown

Project progress

Rock UK has a long term lease for the Centre from Taff Bargoed Development Trust. The build is complete and the project is fully operational subject to some final small amendments. The gym is fully-equipped but will open in 2020 once management team has sufficient capacity. The build phase overran by 3 months and cost slightly more than the original budget. The final claim has been paid by Visit Wales. The construction could potentially have been quicker and cheaper but Rock UK made a corporate decision to keep the climbing wall open throughout the build to counter potential reputational damage.

Trading loss for current year is greater than anticipated but forward bookings suggest the Centre is still on course to break even in the 3rd year. Rock UK is now seeing a steady rise in repeat residential party bookings which are key to sustainability. The Centre has just recorded its busiest ever day in terms of residential groups. Success will depend on finding new markets for weekend/ school holiday residential and more local leisure business. The Centre's reputation is strong with activity and climbing organisations. There are still barriers to engaging the local host community in terms of casual use.

Caernarfon Waterfront Tourism Attractor Destination

Lead: Gwynedd Council

The project aims to utilise Caernarfon's cultural and historical assets including the World Heritage Castle and historic environs; strong indigenous creative arts/industry; gateway to Snowdonia; harbour town with unique and historical waterfront; linking of key attractions such as the Welsh Highland Railway and Wales Coastal Path. The Caernarfon project will realise tangible local, regional and national economic benefits through the provision of sustainable jobs and growth in Caernarfon. It comprises two key work packages funded through this ERDF programme;

- Work Package 1: Welsh Highland Railway Terminus. Development of new station/terminus facilities for the internationally renowned Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways within the Slate Quay area.
- Work Package 2: Galeri Creative Enterprise Centre. Enhancement to the Galeri Creative Enterprise Centre located on Doc Fictoria.



Start date: March 2016
End date: September 2018



Total Project Costs: £6,670,520
TAD/ERDF investment: £2,454,243

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date (provisional: Galeri data only)
Jobs accommodated	13 fte	6
SMEs accommodated	4	3
Land developed	0.26ha	0.05ha
Premises created / refurbished	1,186m ²	629m ²
Additional indicators		
Total visitor numbers	26,750	Unknown

Project progress

The **Welsh Highland Railway Terminus** in Caernarfon is complete, although it has been a complex project. Excavations revealed the need to move sewerage pipes and to work around a gas main that was discovered under the site. A 'soft opening' of the station took place at the start of April 2019. WHR sought to employ as many local people as possible with Welsh language skills, and employed an experienced station manager to ensure the new station could run smoothly. The railway terminus has been developed to include a café, a shop and an event/exhibition space. They plan to offer private hire of this main event/exhibition space; there is already interest in the space. The enhancement to **Galeri** has been completed as planned. A new member of staff has been running a programme of craft activities for visitors (children, schools etc.) using the new craft space. Jobs have been created (including 2/3 new customer service staff, 1 technician, 1 for digital marketing). Galeri has responded to the need to employ additional staff to deal with the higher numbers of people visiting the venue, associated with the considerable increase in visitors the cinema. There are visitors year-round now, so the pattern is less seasonal. There has been a direct

impact through TAD in terms of reducing the effects of seasonality, with larger numbers of year-round visitors strengthening the venue's financial situation and providing greater 'breathing space' for the senior leadership team to be able to plan ahead strategically with greater security.

Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle

Lead: Torfaen & Caerphilly County Borough Councils

The M&B Canal Adventure Triangle project will develop outdoor recreation, tourism and leisure activity along the canal in Torfaen and Caerphilly and connecting upland area of Mynydd Maen. The resulting destination will form an 'Adventure Triangle' bounded by the Canal and the A472 Crumlin to Pontypool Road. The project includes 16 work packages, including development of visitor facilities, access improvements, cycling and walking infrastructure, and the restoration and enhancement of the historic structure of the canal.

A programme of complementary investments in infrastructure and visitor hubs is proposed along the canal corridor to develop its offer as a major destination and resource for outdoor recreation and tourism in SE Wales. The project will be delivered by a partnership consisting of Torfaen CBC (Lead), Caerphilly CBC, the Canal and River Trust, and the Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canals Trust.



Start date: October 2018
End date: December 2020



Total Project Costs: £4,674,779
TAD/ERDF investment: £2,000,000

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	7	
SMEs accommodated	2	
Land developed	19.3ha	
Premises created/ refurbished	364m ²	
Additional indicators		
Visitor numbers	30,000	

Project progress

Despite some delays and challenges associated with procurement, match funding, technical considerations and capacity, a number of the work streams are on site, for example the accommodation and adventure hub at Cwmcarn. The project is the only one which is jointly managed by two local authorities and the project has generated excellent partnership working.

In some respects, the work streams are being delivered as stand-alone projects but all fall under the adventure triangle theme. However, there are no plans to use this for future branding and marketing. As well as delivering core outputs, it is anticipated that the project will deliver a number of softer outcomes associated with health and well-being, volunteering etc.

Llys y Frân Park and Activity Centre

Lead: Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

The Project will re-energise Llys y Frân country park and trout fishery to become an iconic tourist destination for SW Wales and the UK as it is developed into a water-themed outdoor activity and educational recreational site. The phased project includes construction of a watersports centre, waterside cabin, refurbishment of the visitor centre and development of bike pumps skills park. Phase 2 involves up-grading the cycle track around the reservoir.



Start date: October 2018
End date: December 2020 (6-month extension)



Total Project Costs: £2,830,001
TAD/ERDF investment: £1,700,000

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	9	
SMEs accommodated		
Land developed		
Premises created	535m ²	
Premises refurbished	335m ²	
Additional indicators		
Visitor numbers	200,000	
Indirect jobs	5	

Project progress

Despite the project being approved in February 2018, there was a delay in signing the contract caused by the delay in securing planning permission for the project. The contractor started on site in January 2019 but unfortunately has now gone into administration, which is having a major impact on project delivery. A 6-month extension has now been agreed with Visit Wales and Welsh Water is currently assessing future procurement options. Currently, the project has not drawn down any funds from WEFO.

Llys y Fran is part of a portfolio of sites in Wales that Welsh Water is looking to enhance the visitor product and experience using adventure activity as a core theme. An important driver for the project is to generate enough revenue to make the facility cost neutral.

The project has secured good support and input from stakeholders including Pembrokeshire County Council and Planed.

Porthcawl Waterside (PRIF)

Lead: Bridgend County Borough Council

Package of projects with a focus on water sports, seafront, connectivity and town centre to present Porthcawl as a coherent, contemporary resort. Work packages include:

- Watersports Centre and café
- Harbour enhancement facility
- Connectivity
- Marketing and events



Start date: April 2016
End date: December 2020



Total Project Costs: £2,555,001
TAD/ERDF investment: £1,565,941

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	17	
SMEs accommodated	3	
Land developed		
Premises created / refurbished	444m ²	
Additional indicators		
Visitor numbers	21,000	
Indirect jobs	40	

Project progress

Good progress is being made in delivering the capital components of the project. The cycle path was completed last year; the Harbour Kiosk has been renovated and is now occupied and the water sports centre at Rest Bay is currently on-site and progressing. A new events programme is being designed: the first major event will be the Porthcawl 10k run in July 2019. The contract for the marketing component of the project is about to be let.

The project is already delivering change with some evidence of an up-lift in investor interest in the town. It is hoped that the investment at Rest Bay and the harbour will provide a stimulus to significant transformation on some of the larger regeneration sites in the town. There has been some re-profiling of the budget with revenue funding being moved to capital to ensure spend was within the overall budget.

The Coastal Partnership has provided an important strategic steer to the project as well as engaging the private sector in design and delivery. Despite the Maritime Centre being a core component of the PRIF project, joint beneficiaries have conceded that there is limited coordination and collaboration between the two TAD projects in the town.

The Maritime Centre, Porthcawl

Lead: Credu Charity Ltd

Development of Maritime Centre on Cosy Corner, adjacent to Porthcawl harbour. The centre will provide a year-round family centred attraction showcasing the maritime heritage of Porthcawl including a coastal science and discovery centre, well-being facilities, café and restaurant, group accommodation and events space.



Start date: December 2016
End date: July 2020



Total Project Costs: £5,571,400
TAD/ERDF investment: £2,134,060

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	55	
SMEs accommodated	7	
Land developed	0.3ha	
Premises created / refurbished	3,000m ²	
Additional indicators		
Visitor numbers	80,000	
Indirect jobs	65	

Project progress

The Maritime Centre project is a core component of the PRIF (Porthcawl Regeneration Investment Programme). There have been delays in delivering the project caused by a re-design of plans to address cost issues and the transfer of land from the council to Credu. Despite delays, the Maritime Centre project is already delivering some quantifiable outputs (jobs, services and facilities) and is seen to be generating renewed interest in the maritime heritage of the town. Sea Quest and marine services are operating from the site and are delivering services in advance of the centre being built. A number of trading companies have been set up to coordinate and drive forward different elements of the project (e.g. Experience Porthcawl.)

Effective mechanisms have been put in place to engage the local community and key stakeholders in the design and delivery of the project.

There is scope for closer collaboration between the Maritime Centre and the council-led Waterside TAD project although it is felt that TAD support for the Maritime Centre has been 'instrumental' in the revitalisation of the harbour area.

Wales International Coastal Centre

Lead: Trust Port of Saundersfoot

The Wales International Coastal Centre will comprise of four linked developments that create a unique coastal tourism experience both through active and passive participation, engaging all ages and abilities, addressing the current missed tourism opportunities within the region establishing Saundersfoot as an iconic marine coastal tourism destination for Wales. The four developments are:

- Marine Centre of Excellence and Coastal Storm Centre;
- Ocean Square Heritage & Arts Centre;
- Coastal Schooner Centre; and
- National Events Deck.



Start date: March 2017
End date: March 2020



Total Project Costs: £9,000,928
TAD/ERDF investment: £4,000,000

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	91	
SMEs accommodated	31	
Land developed	0.7675ha	
Premises created / refurbished	2,375m ²	
Additional indicators		
Total visitor numbers	875,889	

Project progress

The National Events Deck opened in Autumn of 2018, with a licence for a capacity of 4000 people. It will act as an all-weather space and the Trust Port have already seen much interest from groups wishing to make use of the space. The shell of the Storm Centre and Marine Centre of Excellence is built and the Trust Port is confident it will be completed within the planned timescales. They had to undertake safety work before development e.g. to model for storm surges. The development will include a 90-seat restaurant (notable chefs have shown interest in the location) and 10 short-stay units. The Trust Port is about to go out to tender for the development of the Coastal Storm Centre element, looking to create an interactive interpretation centre. They have received final planning permission for the development of the Ocean Square Heritage & Arts Centre and all consultations have been completed. This development will be a public, open access space and they aim to start building in August 2019 with a 56-week timetable for completion. The Trust Port is mitigating a slight delay in the planning process for the Heritage & Arts Centre by going out to tender for the Coastal Schooner Centre at the same time (just for the design and build, as they have already completed surveys and assessments).

Conwy Coastal Tourism Project – Venue Cymru Reconfiguration

Lead: Conwy County Borough Council

Venue Cymru is Wales' only purpose-built theatre, conference and exhibition venue. It is a multi-use building comprising a 1500 seat theatre auditorium, a 1550 m² Arena that can accommodate all-standing concerts for 2500 patrons, banqueting for 1000 and major exhibitions or sporting events. A further major conference space seating 800 and a function room for 250 are complemented by 18 meeting spaces for between 150 and 10 delegates and a range of foyer and breakout spaces.

As a regional events venue and theatre, Venue Cymru is fast reaching a point where the demand is outstripping capacity, and Venue Cymru needs to evolve to retain its position and compete within the sector. This can be addressed through the reconfiguration of the current building allowing better use of the existing space to accommodate the varied programme of shows and events; with the improved quality of the offer attracting more visitors to North Wales and Venue Cymru, helping to extend the visitor season.



Start date: September 2017
End date: February 2020



Total Project Costs: £2,791,642
TAD/ERDF investment: £832,262

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	0	
SMEs accommodated	0	
Land developed	0	
Premises created / refurbished	3777m ²	
Additional indicators		
New jobs created	5	
Additional visitor numbers	15,000	
Indirect jobs created	60	

Project progress

Venue Cymru report that they are broadly where they expected to be. Some delays were experienced at the outset of the construction phase due to issues encountered during early site excavations. An important consideration for the project was how to deliver the development without impacting negatively on the programme of activities being delivered at the venue. This involved detailed planning with contractors to timetable key aspects of construction around events. This has been managed successfully to date.

Improving the quality of physical facilities is a key focus for the TAD operation and for this project. This has been seen for some time as an area requiring improvement and project partners are already confident that the development and reconfiguration of space within the building will have a

significant impact on what Venue Cymru is able to offer in terms of quality and scale. The development of re-servicing spaces will make it easier to manage and host a range of events. Much of the development will not be visible to the public or to clients but will make a substantial difference to how events are delivered and will improve the quality of service provided by Venue Cymru.

Contractors are aiming to be finished on site by August 2019. The project manager is holding back on installation of certain technical elements for procurement at a later date. The project is running to plan.

Pendine Land Speed Cultural Centre and Eco Resort Complex

Lead: Carmarthenshire County Council

The project involves the development of indoor and outdoor high quality, year-round visitor destination facilities that will aim to maximise Pendine's heritage & its natural assets to drive forward the resorts future economic regeneration as a 'day and stay' event destination. Specifically, the project involves the creation of a new, first of its kind modern and exciting sea front visitor attraction facility. The attraction will contain a necklace of three individual but complementary projects all designed to achieve the resorts end objective. The individual projects included in this funding package are:

- A new Speeds of Sand Visitor Centre with iconic tower;
- The Dunes' Eco Activity Holiday resort; and
- Visitor Experience External Enhancement & Event Facilities Project.



Start date: September 2017
End date: October 2020



Total Project Costs: £7,027,875
TAD/ERDF investment: £3,000,000

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	60	
SMEs accommodated	4	
Land developed	1.97ha	
Premises created / refurbished	1765m ²	
Additional indicators		
Visitor numbers	41,400	
Indirect jobs created	123	

Project progress

The site borders MOD land, currently leased to Qinetiq. The original plan for Pendine assumed transfer of some of this land to allow bigger development e.g. 2 museums. This has not been forthcoming, so the site is a little more constrained. Other elements of the original plan have been completed e.g. creating a landscaped area to east of the main road on previous MOD land. Carmarthenshire County Council is looking to undertake a land swap with a local holiday park to have more beach frontage in public ownership.

Tenders were delayed by 8 weeks against original plan. The main build contract is underway for the Museum, Eco-Hostel, Garden, Play Area etc. However, this process has been delayed due to discovery of asbestos under the demolished previous museum. It is expected that the contractor can make up the time and the museum building should be available in July 2020. The eco-hostel is being built to budget hotel standards and there is no operator yet identified. There is a working partnership established with the Community Council, which includes many Pendine businesses.

Caernarfon Waterfront Tourism Attractor Destination – Caernarfon Castle

Lead: Historic Environment Service, Welsh Government

The Caernarfon Castle project complements the Caernarfon Waterfront Tourism Attractor Destination project. The proposals aim to improve visitor dwell time and overnight stays supporting the broader strategic regeneration programme. The main King's Gate entrance area will be the focus, enhancing visitor welcome through the following elements.

- Access to the upper embattlements (including for those with mobility issues).
- Identifying and developing imaginative, interactive and immersive experiences.
- The provision of a light snack and refreshments area..
- Increased and improved retail space within the Kings Gate Tower area
- Improvement to current Visitor WC provision, extending to the inclusion of DDA compliant facilities.
- Increase in staffing area and improvement of facilities.



Start date: September 2016
End date: December 2020



Total Project Costs: £3,130,697
TAD/ERDF investment: £2,089,946

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	7.5	
SMEs accommodated		
Land developed		
Premises created / refurbished	300m	
Additional indicators		
Jobs safeguarded	6	
Total visitor numbers	15,000	

Project progress

No building activity has yet started. The project has faced expected challenges associated with upgrading listed buildings and ancient monuments. They had identified key weaknesses which needed addressing through the project e.g. facilities and space for staff, no space for food or drink and accessibility issues. They undertook an options appraisal and decided on making improvements in one specific location within the Castle. However, there is a Management Plan in place (since the castle is a UNESCO world heritage site) and there was concern that the project would be contradicting this management plan, having a negative impact on the feel of the Castle. It was decided that adapting the King's Gate would undermine some key attributes related to being a world heritage site. As such, the current plan is that the café will be situated above the shop. They received the design around the middle of 2018 and are planning on putting in an application in September 2019 for permission from UNESCO.

Holy island International Visitor Gateway

Lead: Isle of Anglesey County Council

The Holy Island Visitor Gateway project consists of three integrated work scopes, focussing on the initial welcome and creating a good first impression of Wales (whilst signposting visitors to the wealth of visitor attractions across North Wales), enhancing the town centre experience, and improving the quality and accessibility of Holy Island's iconic attractions and landmarks. The three work scopes are as follows:

- Holyhead Port Facilities (including Railway);
- Holyhead Old Town; and
- Holy Island – Iconic Visitor Destination.



Start date: April 2016
End date: December 2020



Total Project Costs: £2,898,280
TAD/ERDF investment: £1,182,280

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	3	
SMEs accommodated	1	
Land developed	0.49ha	
Premises created / refurbished	250m2	
Additional indicators		
Visitor numbers	18,000	
Indirect jobs created	13	

Project progress

Despite some delays (the project is approximately 12 months behind the original schedule), progress is being made in preparing for the delivery of the capital components of the project. The Visit Wales marketing and branding, which will be used in the port and town centre, will be rolled-out during 2019/20 financial year in terms of enhanced signage, interpretation and wayfinding. The main capital works (car park and interpretation) will similarly be taken forward during 2019/20. A major component of the Breakwater Country Park enhancement has been providing £400k match for the 4 Year HLF Landscape Partnership project. Although the project has been approved, there is a delay as partners are still awaiting the Permission to Start letter from HLF.

There has been some re-profiling of the budget mainly due to the motorhome / caravan park being excluded from the Country Park development.

Vale of Rheidol Railway: Wales to the World

Lead: Vale of Rheidol Railway Ltd

The Vale of Rheidol is an internationally recognised heritage railway operating from Aberystwyth. It offers a 12-mile historic ride taking passengers back in time to the 1930's. Since the 1980's Railway has been collecting steam locomotives from around the world. These Locomotives have never been on public display. The Railway has for many years been working towards the goal of bringing the collection together on display in the Centre of Aberystwyth. This project will enable the first of these rare and special locomotives to go on display in the restored Edwardian Locomotive shed, alongside offering enhanced visitor facilities suitable for a major attraction. Once open the new space will enable the Railway to embrace other commercial opportunities such as conferences and large tourist events. One key area which this development offers is an all year-round, non-seasonal attraction.



Start date: March 2016
End date: December 2020



Total Project Costs: £2,481,502
TAD/ERDF investment: £868,556

WEFO Indicator	Target	Progress to date
Jobs accommodated	34	
SMEs accommodated	1	
Land developed	1.619ha	
Premises created / refurbished	5100m ²	
Additional indicators		
Visitor numbers (incremental)	10,000	

Project progress

Work already completed includes: New extended parking area; new platform and relocated passenger shelter; new station track layout, points and signaling; new toilet block; temporary shop and ticket office; new water tower; and site clearance for building carriage sheds. Work still to be completed includes: new carriage shed (alongside National Rail Station); new ticket office and shop; and creation of museum display area in the Great Western shed.

Because of the exigencies of maintaining an operating timetable it has only been possible to undertake work at certain times of the year. The project is however more or less on track in terms of timing and within £1000 of projected spend. As a small charitable organization used to carrying out all its own capital and development work in the past, there have been some challenges for VRR in getting the project to this stage. Challenges have included familiarizing themselves with and responding to WEFO requirements and balancing cash flow.