

## 6 Swansea Bay

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION



*Considering the Plan*

The consultation event was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2003 in The Princess Theatre Royal, Port Talbot. Thirty-six participants attended, representing national and local organisations and sectors, as shown in Appendix.

This was one of the larger events, benefiting from the range of sectors and responsibilities represented.

### 6.2 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Initial presentations from the plan team led to discussion about the need to link the Spatial Plan to existing sustainability appraisals and environmental strategies, as well as community plans, and questions about how the plan would be used by the Welsh Assembly in decision-making. Many of these issues were also repeated at other events.

Discussion about the zone and its attributes yielded a wealth of local knowledge, leading to more fine-grain descriptions of zone characteristics. Issues highlighted were the changing importance of the port in relation to air and road transport; cultural identity being defined not just by Welsh-speaking (although this was important); tension between the relatively prosperous M4 corridor and poorer valleys; the close proximity of prosperity and poverty; and the considerable scope for economic regeneration.

The complexities of issues in such a diverse zone were reflected in discussion around the sustainability matrix, with a mix of positive and negative pressures in most instances.

Participants suggested that more 'people-oriented' cards were needed to reflect, for example, health issues. Groups added a wide range of new cards during discussions, and after prioritising, the following themes were chosen for discussion in the afternoon: Knowledge Economy, Role of Centres, Distinctiveness, Swansea Bay Leadership, Infrastructure and Transport, Brownfield Development.

A range of specific actions, and participating agencies, were identified for each of the implementation areas. Not surprisingly, given the range and complexity of activities, leadership, effective partnership working, improved communication and conflict resolution were recurring themes.

### 6.3 THE EVENT

Following an explanation of the purpose of the day and a presentation of the Plan components, remarks and questions were taken from the audience. These concerned:

- Would it be more useful to draw together different sustainability appraisals and to have one national document in terms of environmental strategies?
- How do Community Strategies fit into the timescale of the Spatial Plan? The linkages to other plans need to be recognised and clarified
- How does the Spatial Plan take account of other strategic issues, such as utilities outside Wales?
- How will the plan be used by the Welsh Assembly in terms of decision-making and funding?

The audience then split into five groups to explore the zones and proposals in more detail. The initial discussions are summarised below. They contain contrasting views because groups did not always present concurring views.

### 6.4 ZONE ISSUES

- The description of this particular area as a Maritime location was questioned. This is not now as important or strong a driver for Swansea. The Pembrokeshire and Menai Yellow Zones have more in common with each other than they have with the Swansea Bay Zone. There are only very few similarities between Anglesey and Swansea Bay.
- Functionally, there was now more of a push towards the airport rather than the sea port. However, it was recognised that the Steelworks is dependant on the port. Nevertheless, it is a less important port/maritime location than Pembrokeshire
- Tourism is a major attribute of the area but this is not listed in the attributes of the Yellow Zone.
- It was considered the Yellow Zone actually has stronger links to England than Ireland, and other European links appear largely ignored
- Indeed, some of the attributes of the Orange Zone fitted better with the area. Overall there was very little difference between the Yellow and Orange Zones. Some felt there are stronger similarities between this area and Cardiff.
- Further clarification is needed on how the Plan defines "high quality environment". The water quality is good, but some of the urban environments are of lower quality Coastal and maritime inland areas need to be included as part of the environmental resource
- As far as cultural identity is concerned, there are Welsh speakers in the hinterland of this area. There are allegedly



*Assessing the Zone*

'more Welsh speakers within a 25 mile radius of Swansea than anywhere else'.

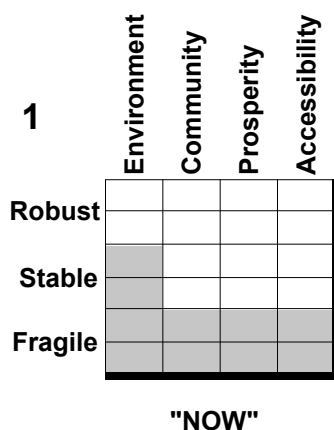
- However, cultural identity is about more than the language spoken. There is not only a Welsh culture, but also other ethnic communities that need to be acknowledged. For some, cultural identity is not necessarily a strong attribute for this area.
- The Steelworks and Local Authorities are the major employers in the area. However there are also a number of private sector employers including British Steel, Ford, 3m, Sony and Panasonic, which means that the area is probably quite resilient to private sector shock, certainly compared to some other areas. Baglan Park is seen as a smaller investment rather than a large-scale private sector investment.
- The area has great potential for further economic regeneration
- The industrial heritage of the area can also be viewed as positive; there is great potential for further growth through its maritime location and recent investment in such locations (e.g. Millennium projects)
- The University is also seen as key driver for economic growth and a stimulant for investment.
- The presence of technia in the area should be acknowledged.
- Despite economic growth potential, there are also pockets of deprivation and crime in the area. There is generally poor health throughout the area. The numbers on incapacity benefit are very high in the Neath/Port Talbot area, for instance, and the Zone as a whole contains a large number of economically inactive residents
- Car ownership is a good indicator of prosperity and is not included in supporting statistics provided by Plan. Holidays taken abroad are also a good indicator of prosperity.
- There was a strong emphasis from some, that it is important that other towns in the Zone are 'not dominated by Swansea'
- There was also a desire by some for a wider 'South West Wales' region, compatible with other existing networks – and bigger than the proposed Swansea Bay Yellow Zone.
- There is a lot of new regional thinking at different levels – e.g. in health, social services and environmental – and we need to recognise and integrate this with better linkages
- There is considered to be a tension between the M4 corridor (more access, less deprivation, better economy) and the Valleys (poorer access, more deprived, weaker or absent economy).
- There is a different range of environmental quality than occurs in other parts of Wales. The urban areas are much weaker, while rural areas are generally better. (i.e. there is not one uniform environment)

- There is no general decline of population in the area; the issue is rather out-migration of young people, especially males. There *is* a problem of *displacement* rather than decline. Young people find it easier to seek employment elsewhere, particularly in Cardiff.
- There is a problem of mobility: people do not travel within and between areas (“insularity problem”)

Other issues mentioned included:

- The concentration of prosperity and poverty in close proximity in some instances, and a number of communities are quite isolated
- Development pressure is being exerted on rural areas and there are problems of housing availability
- There is currently limited infrastructure capacity to deal with some of the pressures.
- The coastal character makes the area vulnerable to climate change.

## 6.5 SUSTAINABILITY MATRIX (1)



The diagrams show:

1. The “Now” Matrix set after group discussion (average of all groups)

2. The Matrix adjusted to show the effects of the implementation of the Plan (average of all groups)

### Environment

- The area contains a range of very good and very bad environments (e.g. good air and water quality on the western side, versus bad air quality and water quality in the eastern part).
- Renewable energy (especially wind farms) will affect area both positively and negatively at the same time.
- Problems exist with traffic increase, waste disposal, and air pollution from industry.
- Measures to protect the environment are in place but need to be strengthened
- Stable, high quality rural environment, however, there are many derelict sites to be dealt with.

On balance groups positioned the Environment around **stable** on the diagram.

### Community

- High crime rates make many communities fragile.
- More industries are threatened with closure, e.g. Port Talbot Steel works which affects community morale. A strong service sector reduces the effects of industry closures.
- Nevertheless many communities are made fragile through low economic performance - particularly in the valleys, Sandfields and Town Hill.
- Decline of the mining industry, has caused communities a loss of identity and lack of purpose.
- Smaller, recently developed industries have however had a positive effect on community cohesion.

- Distinctive communities exist through an industrial heritage and culture. However, out-migration of youngsters and absence of job opportunities pose serious threats to long-term stability.

In general the Community was considered to be **fragile**.

### **Prosperity**

- Strong linkages between communities and the housing market were recognised.
- There is a growing tourist industry in the Swansea area.
- And the busy port activity is also a positive factor.
- While Swansea town centre can be seen as vibrant and successful, more remote communities suffer from economic deprivation.
- Economic inactivity and lack of job opportunities however pose additional threats to the area.
- Despite some successes some suggested there are problems in attracting inward investment.

Groups' combined rating for Prosperity was **fragile**.

### **Accessibility**

- Poor rail infrastructure but good East-West road connections.
- Broadband in the area is robust, which compares favourably with some other parts of Wales.
- Access to and from the valleys is inadequate and leads to a sense of isolation or remoteness.
- Links to strategic routes not as good as to Cardiff.
- Some felt there was poor strategic infrastructure.

Despite some positives, Accessibility was rated as **fragile**, by combining group scores.

## 6.6 PRIORITIES AND TIMESCALES

Groups considered the range of Plan cards representing the draft proposals listed in the table (and given in the PDF document accompanying this report). The placement of the cards in the Timescale / Priority matrix is shown in the table below. Darker tones represent strong consensus.

**Figure 1 - Group Card Placements**

Challenge	Timescale			Priority			Weighted Priority
	Short	Medium	Long	High	Medium	Low	
Linkages	3	2		5			15
Skills	4	1		5			15
The Knowledge Economy	3	2		5			15
Transport Hubs	2	3		5			15
Employment Growth	2	3		4	1		14
Distinctiveness	2	2	1	4	1		14
Brownfield Sites	2	2	1	4	1		14
Competing Demands	2		3	4	1		14
Opportunities	2	2	1	3	2		13
Cultural Economy	1	3	1	3	2		13
Integration*	3	1		3	1		11
Infrastructure*	1	2	1	3	1		11
Travel Times	1	1	3	2	2	1	11
Centres*	3	1		2	2		10
Urban Area Performance*	2		2	2	2		10
Transport to Ireland	1	3	1	1	3	1	10
Irish Links		4	1		4	1	9
Neighbouring Zones*		2			1	1	3
<b>Collaborative Work:</b>							
E) Enhance Environment of Former Industrial Area	1	2	2	5			15
B) Strengthen performance of Swansea Bay	3	1	1	4	1		14
C) Share Success of SE Wales*	2	1		2	1		8
D) Increase Prosperity of Disadvantaged Areas*	1	1	1	2	1		8
F) Upgrade A40*		2	1		2	1	5
A) Leadership *		1	1		2		4
<p>Note: Actions with an asterisk indicate that one or more groups dropped them from the selection. Weighted Priority is determined by multiplying High priority scores by 3 and Medium by 2 and then adding across all priorities Dark cells indicate the degree of consensus light shading indicates little consensus.</p>							



Prioritising

### Added cards

- Tourism and Recreation: Dylan Thomas Canal Network, bike trails
- Better integration of Health and Employment Services
- Sustainable Renewable Energy
- Environmental Sustainability
- Sustainable Minerals and Aggregates
- Green Tourism
- Quality of Life to enhance and maximise benefit for people and economy
- Marine Environment: Safeguard and develop the opportunities for social and environmental benefits – reconcile WAG / local planning/ land use issues
- Improve integrated transport systems within and between urban centres
- High speed South East Wales road link
- Transport “box”
- Diversify town and city centre economies (beyond retail and pubs)
- Health and wellbeing strategy (age and deprivation)

### Summary

- The highest priorities were given to ‘linking’ objectives such as the creation of linkages, the creation and retention of skills, the development of the knowledge economy and the creation of transport hubs.
- A middle ranking set of objectives dealt with aspects of local distinctiveness, the treatment of brownfield sites and resolving competing demands in creating business opportunity and employment.
- Links with Ireland and with other neighbouring zones were accorded a low priority.

Comments drawn from the groups in their deliberations, and noted by the facilitators, included:

- It was felt that the cards were lacking in ‘people’ oriented issues: e.g., if poor health is such an issue in this area, why isn’t there a card to reflect this?
- Health and employment need better integration because of high rates of people on incapacity benefit. Primary care also needs improvement.

### Environment

- *“Reconcile competing demands for the use of key environmental assets including National Parks”*: To what extent is the environment really seen as a key asset within the area?

## **Community**

- *“Identify key centres, networks and linkages to increase the range of social and economic opportunities, e.g. health”*: This has already been done. The issue is actually their sustainability and recognition of this has to be spread.

## **Prosperity**

- *“Promote public sector employment and SME growth”*: The area is already dominated by public sector employment. Complementary SME growth should be a priority.
- *“Strengthen as a location for more balanced development with neighbouring zones”*: Nice aim, but what exactly does it mean? There is little cooperation between zones – rather there is severe competition.

## **Accessibility**

- *“Support improved road, ferry and rail connectivity to Ireland”*: Have there been any recorded successes? Is there a real potential or just a current hype? Cheap flights suggest that people would rather travel to other countries.
- *“Improve travel times to the east”*: this has already been achieved to a degree. Doubts as to whether this would really increase quality of life were raised.
- *“Strengthen linkages within the zone and between zones to maximise potential”*: The emphasis should be *within* zones.

## **Collaborative Work**

- *“Maximise the potential of Swansea Bay to provide leadership to South West Wales including enhancing the role of Swansea as the regional centre”*: Is this an action that isolates Pembrokeshire? More decentralised power might help remote communities.
- Swansea lacks the credibility and support in the South West to take the ‘leadership’ of the area.
- *“Identify opportunities for Swansea Bay to share in the success of the South East Wales area”*: There is the need to establish more attractions within the area to attract people to Swansea Bay and to make them stay for a weekend. At the moment, tourism is not sustainable. It is not a solution for economic shortcomings as it is largely based on seasonal work, part-time employment and low wages.

2

	Environment	Community	Prosperity	Accessibility
Robust				
Stable				
Fragile				

"THEN"

## 6.7 SUSTAINABILITY MATRIX (2)

- Environment: all groups agreed that the actions would not have much affect on the Environment of the area.
- Community: was generally made more **stable**
- Prosperity: improvement to **stable** was indicated
- Accessibility: improvement to **stable** was indicated

The working through of suggested Plan proposals was seen to have little effect on the Environment while raising Community, Prosperity and Accessibility to more stable positions. This was not unlike the findings in some of the other zones.

## 6.8 IMPLEMENTATION DISCUSSION THEMES

From the morning's worksheets the following key priorities were selected. Some of these are amalgamations of the clusters of projects on the sheets.

1. Knowledge Economy
2. Role of Centres
3. Distinctiveness
4. Swansea Bay Leadership
5. Infrastructure and Transport
6. Brownfield Development

Each group selected two topics for discussion

### Knowledge Economy

#### Actions:

- Making funding more accessible and understandable to users, e.g. ICT strategy for Welsh Development Agency
- Collaboration of academia and business to encourage research and development
- Infrastructure required to attract new economy
- Leadership working to take decisions
- Make sure partnerships are in place to deliver initiatives
- Identify skill gaps between education and business requirements

#### Actors:

- Technium, Job Centre Plus, Swansea University, Swansea Institute
- Knowledge Exploitation Fund, Education and Learning in Wales, Welsh Development Agency, Wales Online

#### Existing Structures:

- Objective 1 Initiatives, (see also "actors")

### *New Structures:*

- Need for leadership, need to use existing structures more effectively

### *Blockages:*

- Incompatibility of existing funding arrangements
- Confused market place for funding schemes
- Poor transport network; particularly transport interchange rail/bus
- Skills gap
- “Decision making”: Effective and co-ordinated leadership is required now!
- Fractured system
- Xenophobia and Parochialism!
- Community Partnership is considered to be tokenistic

## **Role of Centres**

### *Actions:*

- Decide whether Swansea shall be seen as the key centre
- Develop sustainable sub-centres
- Promotion of existing positive facilities: technia, health, culture, heritage etc.
- Need for better shops, ideally in town centres
- Recognise impact on out-of-town shopping
- Develop centres of cultural significance
- Ensure sustainable access
- Better linkages between bus/rail system

### *Blockages:*

- Out-of-town developments
- Social exclusion

## **Distinctiveness**

### *Action needed:*

- Improve quality of environment
- Get community plans right
- Better joint working, e.g. on Dylan Thomas theme
- Explore links to Northern Spain: use INTERREG III best practice
- Conferences as a means of pulling people in
- Acknowledge the rural hinterland

### *Actors:*

- Usual range of key agencies and partners

### *Existing structures:*

- Joint working arrangements: many are actually in place, Community plans

*New Structures:*

- Only on specific themes which are not picked up - do not overcomplicate

*Blockages:*

- Lack of understanding of distinctiveness
- There is also a lack of commitment and individual participation
- Declining populations
- Apathy of existing populations

*Others:*

- The energy and input of incomers can be a positive force

**Swansea Bay Leadership**

*Actions:*

- Market inward investment
- Equal benefits to neighbours
- Improve existing infrastructure
- Exploit coastal location
- Highlight quality of life
- Demonstrate leadership qualities while recognising complementary roles
- Effective joint working (South West Wales Economic Forum)

*Actors:*

- Local Authorities, Welsh Development Agency, Welsh Assembly Government, Private sector

*Existing Structures:*

- Joint ventures, South West Wales Economic Forums, Swansea Bay Partnership

*Blockages:*

- Why jobs not following investment?
- Lack of investor confidence

**Infrastructure and Transport**

*Action Needed:*

- Strategic overview of integrated transport
- Community transport
- Energy policy at national level – proximity of supply etc.
- Cwr Cymru Asset Management Plan: strengthen process and cater for existing deficiencies but also new developments

- Broadband

Actors:

- Welsh Assembly Government, Local Authorities, Voluntary sector, Department of Trade and Industry, Local Authorities, energy companies, Dwr Cymru, OFWAT, Tel Co's

Existing Structures:

- Regional transport groups, Trunk road review, Regional economic groups

New Structures:

- Integration of regional structures required, Strategic Rail Authority in South Wales (temporarily?)

Blockages:

- Overemphasis on roads
- Dispersed population – public transport does not work! Community Transport a solution?
- Resources
- Sewage disposal capacity constraint
- Lack of competition
- Policies

### **Brownfield Development**

Actions:

- Brownfield strategy which takes into account: biodiversity, inward investment, regeneration and businesses
- Small to Medium Enterprise sites to tackle valleys areas

Actors:

- Welsh Development Agency, Private sector, EA

Existing Structures:

- Community Partnership, Welsh Development Agency, Local Authority, Welsh Assembly Government, South West Wales Economic Forum

New Structures:

- Better collaboration and linkages to regeneration?

Blockages:

- Money/resources
- Lack of communication

### **Knowledge Economy/Economic Growth**

Actions:

- Exploit infrastructure
- Support higher quality firms
- Cluster support

- Fill gap between skills needed and provided

**Actors:**

- Community Consortium for Education and Training, Education and Learning in Wales, Welsh Development Agency, Gateway, Schools, Private sector organisation

**Existing Structures:**

- Community Consortium for Education and Training, Education and Learning in Wales, Welsh Development Agency, South West Wales Economic Forum and Planning Forum, Objective 1 Partnership, Community Plan

**New Structures:**

- Audit/Honesty/Political Resolution, Community Consortium for Education and Training renewed, Redirect steering powers from Assembly to regional committees, Priority from Community Plans

**Blockages:**

- Resources
- Conflict
- Community Consortium for Education and Training overloaded
- Funding rules

# Appendix

## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

- Dawn Blower South Wales Police
- Andrew Barker South Wales Police
- Jeanie Gray New Opportunities Fund
- S.P.Byrne WUFO
- P Bailey M&WW Fire
- Richard Dommett British Waterway
- David Whitehead City and Council of Swansea
- Kim Flanders City and Council of Swansea
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- Mike Richardson Neath Port Talbot CBC
- Owain Lewis Neath Port Talbot CBC
- Karen Maddock Jones Countryside Council for Wales
- Richard Bevins National Museums and Galleries of Wales
- Steve White City and Council of Swansea
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- Andrew Bellamy Swansea NHS Trust
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