



# Abergavenny Museum and Castle Events Project

Feasibility Study Final Report  
September 2017



# CONTENTS OF FEASIBILITY STUDY

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<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>p.3</b>
--------------------------	------------

<b>1. The ‘Events Project’</b>	<b>p.7</b>
--------------------------------	------------

- Client brief
- Consultancy work undertaken

<b>2. About Abergavenny Museum and Castle</b>	<b>p.9</b>
---	------------

- Brief history
- Vision, mission, aims and objectives of Monmouthshire Museums Service
- Visitor profiles
- The qualities of Abergavenny Castle as a venue for events
- Existing use of Abergavenny Museum and Castle for events
- Existing events and venues in and around Abergavenny

<b>3. Results of consultations and other investigations</b>	<b>p.22</b>
---	-------------

- Consultations with local event organisers
- Consultations with internal stakeholders
- Consultations with other key stakeholders
- Consultation workshop
- Review of the proposals for the ‘covered structure’

<b>4. Proposed events programme</b>	<b>p.31</b>
-------------------------------------	-------------

- Summary of proposed events
- Programming
- Phased development of the Events Project

## **5. Marketing strategy**

**p.35**

- Growth and development opportunities – why do this now?
- Review of current marketing activity
- Competition

## **6. Business Plan**

**p.44**

- Review of current income generation from events
- Events income generation strategy
- Addressing issues and managing risks

## **Appendices:**

**p.49**

**Appendix 1 – Summary of Monmouthshire tourism statistical data**

**Appendix 2 – Castle ‘walk through’ series of photographs**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This feasibility study has been commissioned by Monmouthshire County Council's Museums Service and is concerned with the development of a programme of events and activities to be delivered at Abergavenny Museum and Castle, in conjunction with the construction of a 'covered structure' (a new 'Events Pavilion'), within the Castle grounds. The scope and remit of the study has been to guide the development of the 'Events Project' and to comment on the; design, layout and location of the 'covered structure'.

The 'Events Project' has been initiated in order to more fully realise the full potential of Abergavenny Museum and Castle to act as an events venue. Events and related activities are well recognised as being central to service delivery. Events provide an excellent vehicle for active engagement of both existing and new target audiences, and are a proactive way to be 'inspiring' and to 'bring alive' museums, heritage, arts and culture – central tenets of the vision and mission of the Monmouthshire Museums Service.

Abergavenny Museum and Castle has a great opportunity and a strong platform on which to build. The opportunity is afforded by strong tourism growth which Monmouthshire is currently enjoying. This growth is fuelling an increase in visitor numbers and consequently a bigger target market. The most recent tourism statistics indicate that the majority of visitors are domestic, and that 'couples and families with young children' form the biggest share of that market. Further, it is clear that visiting castles and museums is the first and third most popular thing to do in Monmouthshire. At the other end of the spectrum the least represented audiences are those in the 16-30 and 80+ age brackets. It is the express intention of the Events Project to both build on existing interests and to address perceived gaps in the market, helping to attract new and under-represented audiences to enjoy what the Museum and Castle has to offer through a carefully designed and targeted Events Programme.

The platform is the Castle grounds themselves, which have a very special set of qualities – the setting and views out, the variety of spaces, the inclusion of the museum, the proximity of a large car park with easy all ability access to the Castle and the location so near to the bustling market town that is Abergavenny, with its own vibrant event scene. More than this though is the strong sense that the Castle and its grounds 'belong to' and are 'appreciated by' local people.

Events at the Museum and Castle are hardly a new initiative. The Castle grounds have been used for public entertainments since the 1880s. More recently the Castle grounds have been host to; heritage re-enactments, school visits, outdoor theatre productions, concerts, wedding parties and drinks receptions, community group activities, organised youth activities and use of the site for picnics and informal recreation. The Castle Grounds have also been one of the three key venues for the Food Festival since its inception nearly twenty years ago, and in the last few years the Castle has been the setting for a packed programme of weekend-long food related events and activities, drawing in up to 1,500 people at any one time.

However, the fact that these events have taken place should not serve to hide the difficulties faced by Museums Services staff and volunteers in staging them. Inclement weather combined with a relatively exposed location and lack of outside shelter has limited the scope and nature of the events that can be put on, and the relative costs of hiring a marquee together with the visual impact of these temporary structures, led museum staff to consider alternatives.

The proposed solution is a 'covered structure' of traditional oak framed construction. The new 'Events Pavilion', rather like a large-scale bandstand, has been designed to provide a permanent shelter within the grounds and a new facility that can be used for a wide range of events and related activities. Critically, providing a unique and 'quirky' high quality / high end events space that can be 'dressed' to suit the occasion.

In the initiation of the Events Project the Museums Service were very aware that in seeking to develop an enhanced events programme and creating a new events space, that the project would need to fit in and add value to what is already happening locally. A key aspect of the consultant's brief was therefore to undertake to consult with other local event organisers and venues within Abergavenny.

The consultants undertook extensive consultations via an online survey, follow up telephone discussions, meetings and a workshop which brought many key local event organisers together. A primary motivation for the consultations was to come to understand existing local events provision and for the findings to inform the design of the programme so that it added value and complemented what is already going on locally. The discussions revealed; wide-ranging support for enhancing the Museum and Castle's capacity to act as an events venue, positive feedback on the proposed design of the new 'Events Pavilion', and some useful new opportunities to develop partnership working. There were a few reservations expressed and these were concerned largely with; protecting the key views out from the Castle, avoiding duplication of event provision and ensuring that the general public continued to enjoy free and unrestricted access to the Museum and Castle grounds throughout the year (wherever possible).

Another area of focus for the consultations was to ensure that the new events programme could be developed with the support and active engagement of a range of internal stakeholders within Monmouthshire County Council. The Museums Service itself has geographically dispersed sites across Monmouthshire, and other centrally driven services are concerned with tourism, countryside and events. The assessment here was concerned with; identifying useful links across council service delivery, building shared capacity to deliver events, and realising new income generating opportunities in order to improve financial viability and service sustainability.

The context to these discussions was and remains an important factor. The Museums Service along with a wide range of other non-statutory 'recreation and leisure' related services is under consideration to be externalised and to come under the management control of a new not-for-private-profit charitable trust – an 'Alternative Delivery Model' (ADM) aimed at enabling continued service delivery and realising cost savings for the County

Council at a time of significantly reduced public expenditure. With this in mind the discussions revealed; a wide range of views as to the nature of the proposed events programme going forward, and a good deal of opportunities that might be realised for joint-marketing, tapping into existing experience and sharing resources internally – most especially with MCC’s Events Team.

However, there was also a sense that in working more closely together that sight should not be lost of the ability to maintain a locally distinct event offer and locally responsive event management. This was felt to be particularly the case within the context of Abergavenny, due in large part to the fact that local stakeholders already perceive the Castle to be ‘theirs’, which is clearly no bad thing! The Museums Service too remains committed to its ‘Forward Plan 2017-22’ and there a strong sense that this needs to be followed through, especially as the transition to the ADM remains uncertain and if it does go ahead, will take time to become fully established.

The proposed events programme has therefore been conceived in line with the above process of consultation. Consideration has additionally been given to; the specific needs of target audiences, how far each event and activity can enhance (and detract from) the Castle’s unique qualities, and most especially to what extent the proposed events and activities can be managed so as to avoid key issues that could otherwise potentially arise with respect to - restricted public access, noise disturbance and anti-social behaviour.

The proposed events programme contains very little that is radical or new. This is because the Museum Service has a long track record of developing and delivering events at the Museum and within the Castle grounds and has over the years tried a wide range of activities. The emphasis is much more upon the development of a coherent programme that is well-planned, but flexible enough to respond to changing demands, and that makes the most of the opportunities afforded by the new ‘Events Pavilion’.

The proposed events programme comprises the following:

- **Heritage related events and activities** – One ‘Heritage Day’ type event in late spring and family oriented small-scale ‘Medieval Life’ events during the summer holiday period.
- **Outdoor theatre events** – A season of outdoor theatre events during the summer holiday period, during the afternoon and / or early afternoon.
- **Concerts and gigs** – Continued support in staging the day long AM Fest (charity fundraising music festival) and development of a small number of mid-week early evening music concerts featuring light / niche music.
- **Learning activities for schools** – story-telling and ‘Medieval Life’ type activities concentrated into one ‘Schools Week’ held during May.
- **Family focused games and activities** – outdoor games equipment and a limited number of ‘family fun’ type activities staged during the summer / summer holidays.
- **Activities and events for youths and young adults** – A limited programme of mid-week early evening activities for youths and younger adults (aged 15-25) staged during spring / summer.

- **Activities and events for older adults** – A programme of mid-week afternoon activities and events for older adults (aged 70+) staged during spring / summer.
- **Community activities and events** – opening up the Castle grounds and Events Pavilion for appropriate use by local community organisations and special interest groups.
- **Food related events and activities** – The ‘Abergavenny Food Festival’ weekend in September and potential new small-scale events in spring / early summer.
- **Wedding receptions** – A restricted number of wedding receptions to be held April – September.

The above programme might be perceived as being ambitious, but it is a deliberate intention of the design that the Castle grounds become more animated, inspiring and alive with activity. There will clearly be a need to manage this so as to avoid conflicting uses, and to minimise unintended impact on the heritage, but the Castle grounds are reasonably extensive and activities can be ‘zoned off’ if required. The Museum management is also mindful of the potential impact of events on neighbours and will therefore undertake mitigating actions when planning the programme.

The benefits of bringing more people in are obvious in terms of reaching out and engaging with more people, but there are also the less obvious fringe benefits of having a continual presence and more people looking out for and after the Castle. The programme will also be phased in over a period of three years, allowing time to trial events and activities, and ensuring only those that meet set criteria are carried forward into the programme for the following year.

The consultants have looked at both the marketing and business planning elements of the proposed events programme and contained within this document are ‘Action Plans’ that highlight the key things that the Museums Service needs to do to ensure that the Events Project is a success.

The main conclusions, however, remain as being that the project is both wanted and needed and that the proposed new ‘Events Pavilion’ will become a valuable additional asset enabling a much wider range of audiences to enjoy what Abergavenny Castle and Museum has to offer.



# 1. THE 'EVENTS PROJECT'

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In this section a summary of the client brief is provided together with an overview of the consultancy work undertaken in addressing the brief, and an explanation of how this report is set out and structured.

## Client brief

The client is the Museums Service within Monmouthshire County Council. The commission was to undertake a feasibility study to gain a fuller understanding of the potential for events in both the castle grounds and within the museum building. The guidance as to the process was that it would include extensive community and local business consultation, to ensure that events proposed complement rather than compete with the existing local offer and have a sustainable legacy.

The objectives of the work were set out as follows:

- *Test the appetite for public, private and corporate events at Abergavenny Castle.*
- *Review existing local events, to understand current local provision.*
- *Review existing community use of castle site.*
- *Identify a potential event programme that would complement existing events and be popular with visitors and locals.*
- *Identify suitable private hire arrangements*
- *Develop an outline Business Plan for events at the Castle*
- *Develop a marketing strategy*
- *Identify how Abergavenny Castle can be used by the wider community,*
- *Identify a list of local businesses that could potentially support events, e.g. food producers, event equipment providers, caterers, sponsors etc.*
- *Draw together existing events toolkits that would be suitable for use by Abergavenny Castle*
- *Provide an event evaluation template, to ensure measurable data is collected.*
- *Develop a price structure for events at the castle*
- *Establish how best to use a permanent structure within the grounds to provide protection from the weather and create a central base for events.*
- *Provide a cost guide relating to any recommended minor improvements, e.g. improved electricity supply or lighting provision.*

## Consultancy work undertaken

Gareth Kiddie Associates - a team of heritage and tourism professionals were commissioned to undertake the study and in the period March – September 2017, undertook the following consultancy activities:

- A web-based analysis of information pertaining to existing and potential audiences for events at the castle.
- A desktop review of the existing use of the site for events and related activities.
- An on-site investigation of the site and its capacity to host events with particular reference to the proposed 'covered structure'.
- Discussions with members of the management team at the Museum and Castle related to their vision for events and their own capacity to manage events going forward.
- Consultations with key internal stakeholders.
- Consultations with local event organisers.
- Consultations with existing and potential new event providers, managers and suppliers of event services, facilities and equipment.

The consultancy activities described above provided the information and evidence to support the compilation of the main elements of the report, namely; the proposed events programme, marketing and business plans, events management 'toolkit'.

This report is set out so as to guide the reader through the results of the consultancy activities described above and to provide the evidence for the conclusions reached and recommendations made.

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## 2. ABOUT ABERGAVENNY MUSEUM AND CASTLE

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The section sets out a brief history of Abergavenny Castle by way of introduction and proceeds to look at the priorities of the Monmouthshire Museums Service in managing the Museum and Castle going forward. A summary of what is known about current visitors both to Monmouthshire and to the Castle itself follows and the section ends with a review of how the Castle grounds have previously been and are currently being used for events.

### **Brief history**

- The Castle is medieval in origins and is infamous for the Christmas Day massacre which took place here in 1175. The original Castle would have been of timber construction. The stone remains you see today date to the late 13<sup>th</sup>, early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*“The keep along with most of the other castle buildings, was destroyed in the Civil War, 1645-1646. In 1818, the present building - now the Museum - was constructed on top of the motte as a hunting lodge for the Marquess of Abergavenny”<sup>1</sup>.*

- The site has housed a museum since 1959 and holds an interesting collection of objects that span the town’s past from the prehistoric to the relatively recent. It also houses temporary exhibitions. It is described in the Forward Plan as follows:

*“Abergavenny Museum was opened ... thanks to a group of local volunteers. The museum has remained at the heart of the town, developing strong links with community organisations. Today visitors are offered the opportunity to view diverse local collections in an historic building and loans of international importance within a modern gallery space. Collections are focused on the history of Abergavenny and district. There are strong archaeological and costume collections. Social history items of particular note include Whiskey the Turnspit dog and items relating to Lady Llanover, Father Ignatius and the Llanthony Valley. The museum within the castle grounds provides both a glimpse into a rich and varied past and an opportunity for people to gather and celebrate their future.”<sup>2</sup>*

- The Castle remains in the ownership of the Nevill Estate Company Ltd and is leased to and managed by Monmouthshire County Council.

### **Vision, mission, aims and objectives of Monmouthshire Museums Service**

- Abergavenny Museum and Castle is currently part of Monmouthshire County Council’s Museum Service.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.abergavennymuseum.co.uk>

<sup>2</sup> Monmouthshire Museums Forward Plan 2017-2022, page 5

- The Museums Service will be guided by its current 'Forward Plan 2017-22' which sets out a very clear direction of travel. Below are some of the key features extracted from the Plan...

**Vision:** 'Inspiring a passion for Monmouthshire'

**Mission:** 'Bringing museums, heritage, arts and culture alive with our communities and visitors'

**Strategic Aim 1:** To create a cross-county museum offer to encourage a sense of pride and community identity whilst identifying opportunities for arts and culture development.

- This would be achieved by converting a suitable space under one roof to create a 'Collections Centre' and public exhibition area, financed through a major capital funding bid.

**Strategic Aim 2:** To ensure we have a resilient and sustainable service.

- This would be achieved by improving and extending our income streams; increasing and widening our user base and raising awareness of the Museums offer; whilst contributing to a vibrant community by adapting and working in new and innovative ways.

**Core Values:**

- Museums are responsible for the stewardship of collections
- Museums are places of individual and institutional integrity with good governance in place.
- Museums are places for public engagement and public benefit

**Links to National Strategies:**

- Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
- Museums Accreditation
- Tackling Poverty through Culture
- Museums Strategy for Wales
- Creative Learning through the Arts
- Social Care & Wellbeing Act
- National Curriculum for Wales
- Curriculum Cymraeg
- Curriculum for Wales, Curriculum for Life

- The Forward Plan also alludes to the Destination Management Plan and details how the Service fits in:

*"Close links exist with Monmouthshire's Destination Development Plan. The main links are to Programme 2: Town & Village Visitor Experience Development Programme 4: Food*

*Tourism Development and Programme 5: Festivals development, using events to boost off peak demand and capitalising on the opportunities to host high profile events at key heritage sites. The role of Monmouthshire Museums includes improving the experience of the town for visitors by helping to interpret its stories and with a wider arts remit staging/promoting events.”*

- As such, both the Museum collection and events have important roles to play in both attracting new audiences, educating and entertaining visitors, supporting local culture and in helping to grow the site’s income.

## Visitor profiles

### General Visitor Statistics to Monmouthshire

- In 2015 welcomed 2.19m visitors, a 4.4% increase on the previous year and a 6.7% increase on 2013<sup>3</sup>.
- This equated to 2.95m visitor days. Day visitor days increased to 1.7m, the highest since STEAM began monitoring tourism in the county seventeen years ago.
- Tourism supports 2744 FTE jobs in the County and generated a total of £187m for the local economy; with staying visitors accounting for 77% of all spend.
- To summarise the Wales Visitor Survey 2016 as it relates to the County<sup>4</sup>:
  - Most visitors are domestic (UK / Ireland), and only 7% of visitors to Monmouthshire come from overseas.
  - Couples and families with young children are the most common types of visitor to the area.
  - Over a third of staying visitors were either first time visitors to Wales or new to this part of Wales.
  - 60% of visitors to Monmouthshire were most likely to have come to the area to visit places, historical / religious sites and attractions.
- The most popular activities undertaken by visitors to Monmouthshire were:
  - Visiting a castle or historic attraction (44%),
  - General sightseeing (30%),
  - Visiting a museum or heritage centre and visiting a religious site (20% for each).
  - Arts and cultural festivals, and more specifically the Eisteddfod (survey coincided with the national Eisteddfod being hosted in Abergavenny), were also popular, with roughly one in eight Monmouthshire visitors attending (12%)
- Satisfaction levels were high with 80% giving it a score of over 9/10.
- Most visitors travel using a car.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/2016/05/20/2015>

<sup>4</sup> Wales Visitor Survey 2016: Monmouthshire County Council - Research Report

- This suggests that there is a large and growing market for sites such as Abergavenny Castle, and that events can be a factor in attracting visitors. If only a small additional proportion of the 2.19 million visitors to the County can be persuaded to make Abergavenny Castle a ‘must see’ site, then that could help make it more sustainable in to the future.

A fuller summary of the statistical data for Monmouthshire is provided in **Appendix 1**.

### **Visitors to the Museum and Castle**

- In 2016 / 17 25,971 people visited Abergavenny Museum and attended Museum run events in the grounds. (N.B. More people would have visited just the grounds on a casual basis and attended outside run events but these visitors are not recorded).
- Of these, 66% come from outside of the area, 11% are local residents, 20% are children and 3% attend specific museum events.
- Monmouthshire Museums contributed £1.47M to the local economy in 2016 / 17 (AIM Economic Impact Survey) with £667,853 specifically attributed to Abergavenny Museum.
- The Service notes that the age groups 16-30 and 80+ are under-represented, whilst some sites also lack visits by pre-school children.
- “Our visitor profile is more middle aged and younger older people and family groups”.
- The Forward Plan acknowledges that in the past there has been a “Lack of visitor analysis data and lack of evidence about the impact that we have on our visitors”.
- However, this has started to be addressed: “A Monmouthshire wide survey carried out across Tourism, Leisure and Culture Services which took place in August 2016 revealed the following comments about what was important:
  - 33% said ‘Museums need to be interesting and educate people’
  - 23% said ‘Information is available and relevant’
  - 21% said ‘History should be preserved and shared with everyone’
  - 14% said ‘Important that museums stay free’
  - 14% said ‘Being able to learn about local history locally’
- This gives the Museum Service a steer in terms of the needs of exiting users, but also suggests who they should be targeting in terms of potential new markets, in particular, local people, families with per-school children and the 16-30 age groups would appear to have growth potential.

### **The qualities of Abergavenny Castle as a venue for events**

- Castles in general are great places to stage events. As ‘romantic ruins’ they appeal to a wide range of people and by their very nature they offer the perfect backdrop for events including, for example; heritage re-enactments, outdoor theatre productions and music concerts.

- Abergavenny Castle is no exception. Indeed the Castle has some unique qualities that make it particularly attractive as a place to stage events, they are as follows:
  - The setting and views out over Abergavenny, Castle Meadows and to the surrounding hills & mountains dominated by the Blorenge.
  - The variety of different spaces within the castle grounds, providing different backdrops and a range of different ambiances and atmospheres.
  - The fact that one of the County's Museums is located in a former hunting lodge in the middle of the grounds and atop the Norman Keep.
  - The location in the heart of the vibrant and picturesque market town of Abergavenny, well blessed with a good range of restaurants, bars and places to stay.
  - The proximity of a large local authority owned car park adjacent to the front entrance gate with easy (level) access into the grounds.



*One of the classic views out from the Castle towards The Blorenge*

- The variety of spaces and the qualities of Abergavenny Castle are shown in full in the 'walk through' series of photographs shown in **Appendix 2**.
- A study<sup>5</sup> commissioned by the Museum Manager, supervised by Cardiff University Student William Tregaskes, and undertaken in the spring of 2017 with the support of museum volunteers looked into the public perception of Abergavenny Castle and its

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<sup>5</sup> 'Understanding the public perception of Abergavenny Museum's Castle and Grounds' William Tregaskes (2017)

grounds. 143 visitors to the Castle were surveyed and two of the key questions focused on the public's perception of the Castle's unique qualities:

- In answer to the question '*Why do we value Abergavenny Castle and grounds?*' and using a preset list of attributes, the conclusions were as follows:
  - Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Castle's 'historic value' was most generally appreciated, with 89% of participants selecting at least one historical attribute.
  - The 'views' out from the Castle were selected by 59% of participants, confirming that the 'views' are important to visitors and a reason for coming to the Castle.
  - The 'natural value' of the site was appreciated by 47% of participants and this was said to be reflective of the importance placed on the Castle grounds as an accessible green space near to the town centre.
  - The 'social value' of the site was appreciated by 45% of participants, said to be reflective of the Castle as a community asset – a focal point where people from Abergavenny can meet, socialise, take children to play and take part in local events.
- A key conclusion drawn from the above is that Abergavenny Museum and Castle is valued by visitors as being so much more than an empty romantic ruin. It confirms that the Castle has a unique and special setting with important views out and across the surrounding area. Critically, it confirms that people also value the Castle as a greenspace, a natural habitat, a community asset and a place to hold local events.
- In answer to the question '*What is the most important view from the grounds of Abergavenny Museum and Castle?*' the results were assessed by how many times a particular view was selected. Four views dominated with the other views being selected only a handful of times. The views in rank order are:
  - Towards the Blorenges (selected 87 times)
  - Towards Sugar Loaf (selected 67 times)
  - Across Castle Meadows (selected 55 times)
  - Across town towards St Mary's Church (selected 21 times)
- The conclusion from this question re-affirms what specific views are important to visitors and in the context of this report will help to guide the siting and size of the proposed 'covered structure'.



## Existing use of Abergavenny Museum and Castle for events

- The grounds of Abergavenny Castle have been used by local people for community events since the 1880s.
- Since Monmouthshire County Council took on the lease for managing the Castle and its grounds the Museums Service has sought to build on this sense that the Castle grounds are open and accessible to the local community and has sought to develop a wide range of events appealing to an equally wide range of audiences. Events and activities have included:
  - Heritage re-enactments
  - School visits
  - Outdoor theatre productions
  - Concerts
  - Community group activities
  - Organised youth activities
  - Use of the site for picnics and informal recreation
  - The Abergavenny Food Festival
  - Wedding receptions
- The photographs below show the nature of some of these events and activities and highlight the existing use of the Castle grounds.

### Heritage re-enactments and family fun days

- The Castle grounds have been used extensively for heritage re-enactments and other heritage related family oriented events and activities



*Tudor Event featuring mock jousting skills / AM Fest Family Fun Day*

## School visits

- School visits are hosted regularly at the Castle grounds.



*School visits*

## Outdoor theatre performances

- The Castle Grounds have become a well recognised venue for outdoor theatre drawing in people from across South Wales as well as visitors staying in the area.
- For some time the grounds were used by the Gwent Youth Theatre to stage performances. The Museums Service hosted its own performances by National touring theatre companies as well as having a longstanding working relationship with the local Borough Theatre.



*Illyria Players August 2016: Image courtesy 'Abergavenny Chronicle'*

## Concerts

- Over a number of years the castle grounds have been used to stage charitable concerts. The 'Relive Rewind' was staged to raise money for Cancer Research and in 2016 an 'Elvis' themed event was staged to raise money for the Eisteddfod.
- The Castle has been host to a small number of concerts. The AM (Abergavenny Music) Fest organised by Abergavenny Round Table was held for the first time in July 2016 and again in September 2017. The event is staged as a fundraiser with a range of family friendly activities taking place alongside a series of music performances taking place from midday to finish at 7.00pm.



*Abergavenny Round Table's AM Fest*



### Community group activities

- The Museums Service maintains excellent links with local community organisations and has facilitated the use of the grounds by groups including Abergavenny Transition Town and the Abergavenny Community Orchard group.



*Transition Town and Abergavenny Orchard groups undertaking planting within the Castle grounds*

### Organised youth activities

- MCC Youth Service have used the grounds for a series of youth activity workshops over three days this summer. The events attracted between 80 -120 young people per day.



*Monmouthshire Youth Service set up within the Castle grounds*

## The Abergavenny Food Festival

- Held annually at the Castle since 2002 the Food Festival has become a key feature in Abergavenny's (indeed Wales') calendar of events and the Castle grounds are considered to be one of the three key venues and fundamentally important to the ongoing success of the Festival.
- Over the two days of the Festival several thousand people visit the castle grounds with around 1500 people on site at any one time. All of the grounds are used and become host to food stalls and food related activities. A 'Ceilidh' takes place on the Friday night before the Festival proper and there is a 'Party at the Castle' featuring live music, dancing and a firework display on the Saturday night.



*Use of the grounds during the day at the Abergavenny Food Festival*





*Castle grounds as the setting for the night party / firework display (above) day time crowds (below)*

### **Wedding receptions**

- A small number of wedding breakfast parties and evening receptions have been held within the Castle grounds.
- The grounds are also used by the Angel Hotel for drinks receptions and wedding photographs.



*A wedding party within the Castle grounds*



## Existing events and venues in and around Abergavenny

- Abergavenny has a reasonably busy programme of events and activities being delivered by a wide range of local community and voluntary organisations, public sector supported organisations and private sector businesses. The key venues and events include the following:
  - Abergavenny Markets – Throughout the week at the Market Hall.
  - Fun-Fair – End of May / early September – Bailey Park
  - Abergavenny Steam Rally – May Bank Holiday, Bailey Park.
  - Proposed ‘Arts Festival’ – Late June (Abergavenny Castle to be one of the venues)
  - Gwyl Plant Gwent – Children’s Dancing Festival – Late June / early July (Abergavenny Castle is one of the venues).
  - South Wales Shire Horse Show – Early July, Bailey Park.
  - Abergavenny Festival of Cycling – Mid July.
  - ‘Wall 2 Wall’ Jazz Festival – Early September.
  - The Abergavenny Food Festival (for which the Castle is already a key venue)
  - Fireworks at Belgrave Park – November 5<sup>th</sup>
  - Abergavenny Christmas Food And Drink Fair – December.

Listing kind courtesy Abergavenny Now website: <http://abergavennynow.com>

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### 3. RESULTS OF CONSULTATIONS AND OTHER INVESTIGATIONS

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In this section the results of a series of consultations with local events organisers and internal stakeholders are set out and the main themes arising out of the discussions are explored. The ‘conclusions and recommendations’ at the end of this section are important as they set out the fundamental basis for the construction of a ‘covered structure’ within the grounds of Abergavenny Castle and for the development and delivery of an Events Programme.

#### Consultations with local event organisers

- The main purpose of the consultations was to ensure that the events programme ultimately developed by Abergavenny Museum and Castle, adds value to rather than competes with what is already in existence and being delivered locally.
- The consultations were undertaken via an online survey (29 respondents)
- Follow up, targeted telephone conversations / face to face discussions were held with 12 of those organisations / event organisers as follows:
  - Abergavenny Civic Society
  - Abergavenny Food Festival
  - Abergavenny Local History Society
  - Abergavenny Town Council
  - Abergavenny Town Team
  - Abergavenny Transition Town
  - Black Mountain Jazz
  - County Marquees Limited
  - Friends of Castle Meadows
  - The Angel Hotel
  - The Borough Theatre
  - Three Peaks Challenge
- A summary of the key findings is presented below:

#### Online survey

- The online survey was designed to ask a range of pertinent questions concerned with two key areas:
  - Views on the Castle and Museum as an historic and recreational public asset.
  - How Abergavenny Castle and Museum can link with and further develop Abergavenny’s annual events programme.

#### *The Castle and Museum as an historic and recreational public asset...*

- 100% of respondents felt that access for quiet recreation is ‘reasonably’ to ‘very important’.
- 73% of respondents ‘agree strongly’ that private events are acceptable and 23% ‘don’t mind’ the Castle grounds being used for this purpose.



- 82% of respondents think that it is 'perfectly acceptable' to hold events in the grounds whilst allowing public access to all other areas. However, a significant minority (9%) felt that this would be 'not acceptable'.

*Links with and further development of Abergavenny's annual events programme...*

- 86% of respondents made suggestions as to new possible events
  - 71% of respondents felt that common ground existed between what they offer and what the Castle and Museum could do to improve Abergavenny's events 'offer'.
  - 91% of respondents saw opportunities for joint working and resource sharing.
  - 90% saw opportunities to collaborate on marketing and promotion of events at the Castle and Museum.
  - 65% would consider the Castle and Museum for events if and when capacity was unavailable elsewhere.
  - 48% knew of possible service providers for the Castle and Museum.
  - 86% had no concerns about the Castle grounds being utilised more frequently for fee paying and / or community events.
- It was clear from the consultations that the majority of the respondents were amenable to the idea that access to the Castle grounds to the general public might be restricted or occasionally prevented as a result of private use.
  - There is also clear support for the Museum and Castle to become a recognised events venue within the town with many organisations feeling that they could use the venue, collaborate on joint initiatives and / or support future events.
  - However, there was a significant minority of respondents who were concerned about this change in emphasis and felt that the public access / private use balance must be addressed and that when the Castle grounds are closed for private events the general public is well informed in advance.

**Telephone / face to face consultations**

- The targeted telephone conversations and face to face consultations afforded an opportunity for the consultants to get that bit closer to local event organisers and better assess more individualised needs and perceptions.
- There are clearly some existing relationships that are ripe to be built upon and new opportunities to be realised with new partners.
- Local events organisers clearly already recognise the Castle as an events venue and feel sufficiently engaged and interested to comment very positively with respect to developing its potential. Part of the reasoning behind this is a clear sense that a vibrant events programme utilising the Castle grounds can be a catalyst for increased footfall in town and more bookings with local accommodation providers.
- There are some real and practical offers of help for the Museums Service to take up.
- There remains a sense that private events should not prevent access to the Castle grounds.

## **Consultations with internal stakeholders**

- At one level the consultations with internal stakeholders were simply an opportunity to look at and draw on existing 'events' good practice at other sites managed by MCC.
- On another level they were an opportunity to look to the future and to see whether the development of a permanent 'covered structure' in the grounds of Abergavenny Castle would add value the MCC's own programme of events.
- However, the consultations were also an opportunity to assess the impact of major cross departmental changes currently being considered, that will (if they come to fruition) impact significantly on the way in which the Museums Service is managed, and therefore on the development of the 'Events Project' in particular.
- Consultations were undertaken via structured telephone interviews and / or face to face meetings with nine internal stakeholders.
- In the course of the discussions a series of recurring themes arose together with some good / positive suggestions as to the potential way forward for the 'Events Project'. These are summarised below:

### **Perspectives on the 'covered structure'**

- There was a general recognition that the provision of a permanent covered structure would be of benefit to the delivery of events at the Castle, and an acknowledgement that continually erecting and taking down temporary structures (marquees etc) was limiting the development of the events programme at the Castle.
- Indeed for some events and activities, particularly those associated with accommodating the needs of visiting school and community groups, a shelter and somewhere to undertake 'workshop style' / 'messy' activities was perceived as adding a real asset to the site which would open up significant new opportunities.
- Where reservations were expressed they were concerned with the flexibility of a permanent structure in use, and the structure's potential to impact on the views out from the site.
- A couple of consultees suggested that the maintenance of the structure in good condition and the prevention of damage through vandalism / nefarious use will be important.

### **Impact of the Alternative Delivery Model (ADM)**

- The delivery of a range of services, including the Museums Service, undertaken by Monmouthshire County Council is currently in a period of flux and change. Public sector spending cuts are forcing local authorities throughout the UK to re-evaluate the scope and range of the services they continue to deliver and to look at 'alternative delivery models'.
- In Monmouthshire the County Council is looking at the possibilities and proposals to establish its own Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) are currently under consideration.

- In this potential future situation it is anticipated that the new model would have greater flexibility to be more responsive and reactive to the market and would be better able to arrange and coordinate a County-wide 'Events Programme' including : joint ticketing / booking arrangements, electronic point of sale (EPOS), coordinated pricing structure, shared catering arrangements and joint-marketing.
- Another major benefit of an ADM would be the ability to better prevent duplication internally, allowing site / programme managers to concentrate on core shared purpose and long term planning.
- As far as the Museums Service is concerned the Service will continue to be guided by its own existing five year plan - Monmouthshire Museums Forward Plan 2017-2022.
- However, the Museums Service Manager recognises that it would be short-sighted not to look at what might transpire and to ensure that new proposals, including this Events Project take account of what might happen in the near future.
- The general sense is, in any case, there will be good value in looking to make these kinds of arrangements happen whether or not the ADM comes into being, so long as the ability to remain locally responsive is maintained.
- These two threads of the discussions are explored further below.

### **Tapping into existing experience / sharing resources / joint marketing**

- MCC already has a well-established Events Team and operating out of Caldicot Castle. The team has built its capacity to deliver a wide range of events including, for example: Family Fun Days, Heritage Re-Enactments, Weddings and large scale music concerts featuring internally famous artists and attracting thousands of people.
- Whilst the team currently has some hand in helping to deliver events outside of Caldicot, most activities are Caldicot based and it is largely left to individual managers at the Museums' Service other sites at; Chepstow Museum, Monmouth Museum and Shire Hall, Tintern Old Station and Abergavenny Museum and Castle, to direct events as they see fit and in line with the priorities for the Service at that particular site.
- An opportunity nevertheless exists to tap into the hard won experience of the Events Team in a more proactive way and to seek out more effective use of existing skills and resources.
- Joint-marketing already takes place and all sites utilize the 'Visit Monmouthshire' platform for advertising their events. However, there is probably scope to be more proactive and there might be clear benefits in looking to market the venues together for certain events.

### **Maintaining local distinctiveness and responsiveness**

- If the benefits of greater collaboration between the MCC Events Team and MCC Museums Service sites is plain to see then sight should also not be lost of the benefits of maintaining local distinctiveness and responsiveness.

- The manager at Tintern Old Station, for example, has developed an events programme that is rooted firmly in what the Old Station site is about and as a result has been very successful in engaging with its key target audiences, which has in turn helped in the development of a loyal following and provided a platform involving local volunteers.
- It is clearly difficult to replicate this process, but it is undoubtedly important to provide the flexibility within the management framework for this to continue to happen.
- As far as the development of the events programme at Abergavenny Museum and Castle is concerned, to some large degree the site managers have in the past and continue in the present to enjoy a good deal of autonomy in developing and delivering the events.
- The manager recognises (and it is explicit with the brief for this commission) that the overriding concerns should be to stage events that fit with (and do not jar against) the Castle's unique qualities and further, that events stages at the Castle add value to and do not compete unnecessarily with what is a relatively thriving local events scene.
- Indeed to some large extent people within Abergavenny, especially some local organisations and event organisers, already perceive the Castle as 'theirs' and very much a part of the town. So in this sense there is already a very positive local context in which the Events Project is being developed and continuing to fit within this will be key.

### **Accommodating wedding / civil ceremonies and private parties**

- All consultees recognise that the grounds at Abergavenny Castle are a very attractive location for wedding and civil ceremonies to take place, that there is an existing track record of hosting weddings (using temporary marquees), and that the proposal to construct a 'covered structure' will enhance this ability.
- There is also plenty of good experience to tap into across the other sites. In some of the discussions it became clear that it might be sensible to jointly market all of MCC's venues as a 'portfolio' thereby offering prospective couples / part planners a wider / more coordinated choice of heritage locations within Monmouthshire.
- However, and in line with the narrative above it might also be sensible to consider a delivery partner rather than trying to deliver internally within MCC.
- The timetabling of other events and the close proximity of neighbours will be considered when planning weddings.

### **Events as a platform for learning**

- Several internal stakeholders commented that using events as platform for learning remains a priority and whilst the interest in traditional approaches may be 'on the wane', responding positively by developing new ideas for engaging family audiences and school groups in particular was seen as being important.
- In this respect the role of MCC's Tourism, Leisure and Culture Learning Officer, will be important going forward. The Learning Officer commented that there needed to be a

move away from a narrow 'history focus' towards the development of creative learning events centred on 'Inspiration' as a theme and vehicle for delivery.

- The Learning Officer also, however, highlighted the fact that there is a capacity issue and that even though schools visits and family events might be able to 'cover their costs', there would be a need to find resources to support the development of this area of work.

### **Engaging new and under-represented audiences**

- Events used as the platform for engaging 'the community' was an explicit aspect of the brief but a couple of internal consultees commented on the desirability of an events programme that started to provide opportunities for new and under-represented audiences in particular.
- To some small degree the Museums Service is already doing this through its work in engaging young people at the Castle via MCC's Youth Service summer workshops programme.
- It was felt that this was the kind of activity that might be extended and developed to include new audiences – especially those that face significant existing barriers to enjoyment of the Museum and Castle, including in particular; people with disabilities / mental health issues, older people, carers and ethnic groups not currently engaged.
- One of the ways suggested to do this was to weave into an events programme opportunities to take part in hands-on 'arts & cultural' activities.

### **Working with volunteers**

- The Museum and Castle already has its own group of volunteers and good links with local organisations, for example; Abergavenny Transition Town and Abergavenny Community Orchard that help out in one way or another.
- A couple of consultees were keen to point out the value of volunteers in helping out at events and becoming part of the team that makes visitors feel welcome, engaged, informed and safe.
- With an expanded events programme in mind and with limited additional resources it will be important to look to find ways to increase the volunteer base.

### **Consultations with other key stakeholders and other research undertaken**

- The consultants undertook some limited additional consultations with other key stakeholders including the owner of the Castle, the Marquess of Abergavenny.
- The consultants also enjoyed an excellent discussion with the organisers of the Food Festival the results of which have been fed into the plan for maintaining the Castle as a key venue in the Food Festival weekend and for growing and developing a range of complementary food related events and activities at different times of the year.

- Other research focused on looking in greater detail at the market for weddings and involved consultations with a number of wedding planners and venues where weddings are already being held (far enough away from Abergavenny so as to not be seen to be in competition).

## Consultation workshop

- Following the completion of the consultations with local event organisers and key internal & external stakeholders a consultation workshop was staged on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2017, 2.30 – 4.30 pm, the primary purpose of which was to draw together representatives of all of the afore-mentioned consultees.
- 12 people attended the workshop which was held at the Angel Hotel. The following organisations were represented: Abergavenny Civic Society, Abergavenny Food Festival, Abergavenny Local History Society, Abergavenny Town Council, Abergavenny Town Team, Monmouthshire County Council, The Angel Hotel.
- The consultants structured the discussions so that a ‘starter for ten...’ was given on a discussion topic as follows:
  - The **key qualities** of the grounds of Abergavenny Museum and Castle as a venue for events...
  - Existing and target **audiences** to be developed...
  - **Capacity** of Abergavenny Museum and Castle - limitations and opportunities...
  - Events ‘long list’, **programming and priorities**...
- Below is a brief summary of the discussions points that arose that were either strongly reinforcing the messages coming through previous consultations or indeed were entirely new.
  - The Castle and its grounds are perceived very strongly as belonging to the community.
  - The grounds are popular with families with young children for picnics and as a safe, enclosed greenspace in which to play games.
  - Local people appreciate the natural environment within the Castle grounds as well as the ‘aesthetics of the spaces’.
  - Small self-organising local community groups use the grounds for health & wellbeing activities – fitness, outdoor yoga, Tai Chi etc. these could be built on & developed e.g. a ‘Walking for Health’ programme.
  - There are strong historical links that might be made more of with other parts of Abergavenny and other castles in Monmouthshire.
  - The Castle grounds make for an excellent setting and backdrop for ephemeral art exhibitions and a key venue for the proposed Abergavenny Arts Festival due to start up in 2018.

- The Castle could and should play a greater role in meeting the needs of younger people in the 20-30 age group and the proposed 'covered structure' will be an ideal facility to host age appropriate activities, including for example; silent discos, outdoor cinema events etc.
- If more events and activities take place at the Castle there will be a need to consider; careful programming, zoning & use of temporary barriers, communicating effectively with target audiences (including most especially neighbours and existing & regular visitors), stewarding and pricing.

## **Review of the proposals for the 'covered structure'**

The client is proposing a traditional timber (oak) framed structure, with a slate roof and open sides (with an additional ability to enclose the structure in part and on a temporary basis). The proposed size of the design is a structure 18M in length and 9M width. From an events perspective the size of the structure would be appropriate for the kind of events proposed above.

The findings of this study also lead to the conclusion that the following features should be considered:

- The ability to insert permanent / semi-permanent panels into the side(s) of the structure would be useful as it would provide some degree of sound protection and would enable services & W.C.'s to be hidden from view when the other sides are drawn back.
- The ability to easily and quickly draw (or roll) down 'sides' to the structure, enabling it to become a weather proof conditioned / heated environment inside. In doing so consideration should be given to how the structure will look without and with sides drawn. An opportunity exists here to make the structure look more like a traditional large marquee type tent when the sides are drawn and an open 'Great Hall' when drawn back.
- The ability to create internal subdivisions to allow for the creation of; a reception area / cloakroom, seating / dining area, dancefloor / stage, catering / serving area, temporary storage area.
- Flexibility for expansion via the ability to attach additional 'awnings' or similar, either to accommodate the areas listed above or to enable increased space for larger events.

## **Location**

- A variety of considerations have led to the conclusion that the best site is on green to left of entrance gate as you enter the castle grounds.
- Consideration needs to be given to: Views across the site, impact on visual amenity of grounds, the neighbours, disabled access and access for delivery vehicles.
- The area immediately around the structure will be important too, there might be opportunities to introduce new planting / landscaping to enhance the setting and increase interest in the site.

## Services

- The majority of the proposed events and activities will require access to W.C.'s and it has been established that the existing facilities within the Museum building are not easily accessible, nor will they always be open.
  - One option is to bring in 'Portaloos' on an event by event basis / as required.
  - Access to a 'wired in' electrical supply will be essential for temporary lighting and for powering event equipment – e.g. amplifiers, speakers, p.a. system etc.
  - Access to a plumbed in water supply would also be useful as some of the events and activities would benefit e.g. food related, schools / family craft workshops etc. There are a number of water taps across the site.
-



## 4. PROPOSED EVENTS PROGRAMME

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This section sets out the proposals for events and activities to be developed, piloted and (presuming the pilot is successful) delivered at Abergavenny Museum and Castle. The key considerations for programming the events are covered, together with the implications for events management and the phased introduction of the events and activities over time. At the end of the section some of the key issues and risks are highlighted together with the ways in which they might be addressed and mitigated.

### Summary of proposed events and activities

The programme of 'Events and Activities' proposed to take place at Abergavenny Museum and Castle and as described below has been put together by the consultants based on a process of consultation and with the following key criteria in mind:

- They meet the identified needs and demands of existing and new target audiences.
- They complement and as far as possible avoid direct competition with what is already going on or planned for the future within the context of Abergavenny town and / or Monmouthshire and surrounding area.
- They fit within the vision and strategic aims of the Monmouthshire Museums' Service.
- They enhance and add value to the Museum and Castle and its setting and not adversely impact on the archaeological / historic interest, the visual amenity or the enjoyment of other visitors.
- Taken together, they will be capable of generating an income sufficient to cover the costs of developing and managing them and to generate a surplus to targets set within the business plan.

The proposals remain as a 'long-list' on the basis that there will still be a need for the staff team to undertake pilot projects, before rolling out those events and activities that can be proven to be successful in implementation.

Below is a summary of the main proposals.

### Heritage related events and activities

- **One 'heritage day' type event** to take place one in late spring. To be developed by the Museums Service, and designed to complement existing and planned heritage events at Caldicot and other nearby Cadw managed Castles. In addition and related thematically to these events, **a programme family-oriented 'heritage days'** laid on one day per week over the school summer holidays and delivered by external contractor(s).

## Outdoor theatre events

- Consolidation and limited expansion of the existing **outdoor theatre events** taking place in the castle grounds, including: Continuation of support to stage productions by a national specialist outdoor theatre companies in August. **Other productions** during the school summer holidays hosted by the local Borough Theatre. The development of a limited programme of up to **three or four smaller-scale outdoor theatre events** enabling local theatre companies and amateur groups to stage / trial new productions and developed as and when the opportunities arise. Each production to appeal to a different target audience. Theatre events to be managed by Museum staff in partnership with Abergavenny's Borough Theatre.

## Concerts and gigs

- The establishment of Abergavenny Castle as a venue for a programme of day-time summer **concerts and gigs** themed to a particular music genre. Music events to be small-scale and intimate in nature so as to not unduly impact on the setting nor on the immediate residential neighbours of the Castle. Music events to be managed on a contractual basis by an experienced / skilled locally based events-management company.

## Learning activities for schools

The consolidation and further development of the Museum and Castle as a venue for learning activities for schools. Facilitated school visits to be initially concentrated into one three day period in May. Visit slots to be offered on a first come first served basis with additional slots if the demand warrants their provision. Castle relevant **story-telling activities** to be provided by a locally based re-enactment group together with a practical taste of medieval life delivered by an external contractor.

## Family focussed games and activities

- The extension of the use of the castle grounds as the setting for a range of **fun and engaging family focused games and activities**. The nature of the design of the games and activities should be simple and practical, drawing inspiration from the Museum's collections and helping make a link between the outdoor environment of the grounds and the indoor setting of the Museum. By their very nature the games should aim to create vibrant 'happy' atmosphere throughout the year, one that helps improve the experience of other audiences without impacting on their own enjoyment.

## Activities and events for youths and young adults

- The establishment of a programme of **mid-week early evening activities and events targeting youths and young adults (aged 16 -25)** during the summer holiday period. The nature of the activities and events would be led by demand but trialing might include things like; **'silent' discos, outdoor cinema screenings** (age appropriate) etc. The programme should be developed by Museum staff in conjunction with MCC's Youth Service, and delivered by existing locally based providers.

## Activities and events for older adults

- The establishment of a programme of mid-week afternoon activities and events targeting older adults (aged 70+) throughout the summer holidays and shoulder periods. The nature of the activities and events would be led by demand but trialing might include things like; **'nostalgic' dances / dance classes, 'singalong' music events, exercise classes – pilates, tai chi etc.** The programme should be developed by Museum staff in conjunction with MCC's Social / Adult Services and delivered by existing locally based providers.

## Community activities and events

- Continuation of opportunities to stage **charitable / community events**, such as the AM Fest and the proposed Arts Festival. In addition to this, the opening up of the grounds and covered structure for hire by a **range of community and special interest groups** whose interests are aligned with those of the Museum and Castle. Availability for hire to be established based on local need & demand. Hiring policy to be managed by Museum staff.

## Food related events and activities

- Maintenance and further development of the role of the Museum and Castle in the successful running of the annual **Abergavenny Food Festival** each Autumn and the development, in partnership with the Food Festival organisers, of **a new small-scale food related event(s)** to take place in the Castle grounds in late spring / early summer.

## Weddings and private parties

- The promotion of the castle grounds and covered structure as a venue for **weddings and private parties**. Weddings might, either be managed internally by the as part of a wider portfolio of other MCC owned venues. Or, alternatively the exclusive rights to manage weddings might be put out to tender for management by an experienced and qualified wedding planner. The number of weddings taking place will be restricted.

## Programming

- A sample 'Year' programme have been drawn up and is shown below. The programming is clearly focussed on meeting the needs and demands of a range of audiences across the year. The range of different audiences has enabled events and activities to be programmed in both the 'Peak Season' and 'Shoulder' periods.
- There are no events scheduled to take place in the off season.

### Abergavenny Museum and Castle - Events Programme

Event	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Heritage related events and activities			Medieval Re-enactment		★			'Medieval Life' activities					
Outdoor theatre events							Outdoor Theatre						
Concerts and Gigs							Light music events day / early eve						
Events and activities for schools													
Family focussed games and activities				Schools' Week				Family Games +					
Activities and events for youths and young adults					Twilight Sessions								
Activities and events for older adults					Music events, dances and exercise classes etc.								
Community events and bookings				Arts Festival	★		Community Bookings		AM Fest	★			
Abergavenny Food Festival & other related events				★			★		★				
Wedding Ceremonies / Breakfasts				Wedding Ceremonies / Breakfasts									
	Off Season			Shoulder		Peak Season			Shoulder		Off Season		

★ = Flagship 'one off' Events    ★ = Small-scale 'one off' Events

## Phased development of the Events Project

- In reaching to so many audiences there is a danger that the programme starts to become 'all things to all people' and in doing so loses a sense of being targeted and focussed.
- There is also a risk to the Museums Service of taking on too much too soon. To counter this the intention within the project development strategy is to establish a 'phased' programme of event and activity development.

## 5. MARKETING STRATEGY

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This section sets out to recommend how the Museum and Castle might improve the marketing of its events and activities. The section starts by looking at why there is a need to do this now, this is followed by a review of current marketing activity benchmarked against marketplace competition. At the end of the section a 'Marketing Action Plan' sets out the specific actions the Museums Service might take going forward.

### **Growth and development opportunities – why do this now?**

- The Service has been recently reviewed and a Forward Plan created which as we have seen, sets out the aims and objectives for the Service going forward. Not least the need to increase audiences and income.
- In particular it recognised that it had the potential to:
  - Be a key service in the delivery of the Welsh Government – Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
  - Increase income generating opportunities.
  - Building Stronger Partnerships
- There is untapped potential at Abergavenny Castle, both in terms of visitor profiles and events usage
- The Castle has seen the benefits and potential provided by events such as the Eisteddfod and the annual Food Festival.
- Britain is becoming an 'Al Fresco' society, with a fashion for more outdoor activities and events (café culture spill over)
- Weddings/ private hire and corporate events are looking for 'venues with a difference'
- The manager has identified funding opportunities for a permanent covered structure in the grounds.
- Visit Wales have been promoting Wales and have initiated a series of themed 'Years' – next year is 'Year of the Sea' and 2019 is the 'Year of Discovery'

### **Review of current marketing activity**

#### **In-house marketing**

- For financial reasons, much of the Castle's marketing is done via on-line sources or through email. The Castle has its own web site which is branded as Abergavenny Museum.

Abergavenny MUSEUM

Home | Events | Links | Cymraeg

Visitor Information | Displays | Museum History | Abergavenny Castle | Collections | Schools | Attractions

**Visitor Information**

**Introduction**

**Abergavenny Museum**  
**The Castle, Castle Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire**  
**01873 854282**


Abergavenny Museum is set in the grounds of a 'ruined' Norman Castle, where you can enjoy a picnic during the summer and a brisk walk on colder days. The museum building was formerly a hunting lodge built by the Marquess of Abergavenny.

The displays tell the story of this historic market town from prehistory through to the present day. The displays are on several levels, with some help most areas are accessible to wheelchair users.

Our features include:

- Regular programme of changing exhibitions
- Family activities, including 'Castle Explorers'. Backpacks, to help you discover more about the castle.
- Workshops and events - please check our events page or contact us to find out about any forthcoming events.
- Staff willing to try and answer any historical queries you may have about Abergavenny and the surrounding area.
- Small gift shop to enable you to purchase a souvenir of your visit.

**Cost:** Free admission for all (charges apply at some special events).



**Abergavenny Museum, The Castle, Castle Street, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire. NP7 5EE | Tel: 01873 854282**  
 Copyright © Monmouthshire County Council

**Why not visit another Monmouthshire Museum:**

CHEPSTOW MUSEUM   Abergavenny MUSEUM   CALDICOT CASTLE   NELSON MUSEUM

MLA   Monmouthshire Air Library

- We feel that adding Castle in to the title would add to its appeal and make it sound more like an events venue.
- It is really useful that the web site has an events page; however, it is currently empty. We would suggest that this should have something in it, e.g. the current temporary exhibition, or perhaps a mention of something like a children's trail that can be given out at the desk (i.e. not necessary date specific events) so that it never looks like there's nothing on.



- The Museum Service has a growing database which receives regular email newsletters re exhibitions, events and other news. This is a sensible way to keep your audience engaged given the financial restrictions upon the Service.
- Posters for events are, where possible emailed out, but some are printed and posted to ensure distribution.
- The Service takes free advertising and listing wherever possible. It is rare for paid advertising to be taken, unless it is for an event/via local press.
- There is cross marketing between the Museum Service Sites.


### Town level marketing

- Abergavenny is a vibrant town and has its own web presence thanks to Abergavenny District Tourist Association. They have searchable listings under headings like 'Indoor Fun'. They also have a 'What's On' section for events. The Castle's listing is shown below:

**Abergavenny Y Fenni**

Home | Places To Stay | Outdoor Fun | Indoor Fun | Eat Drink Shop | Rainy Days | An Hour Away | What's On | Directions | Deals & Offers

**Abergavenny Museum & Castle** You are here: Home > Abergavenny Museum & Castle




Activities and Attractions | Indoor Activities & Attractions

The Castle, Castle St., Abergavenny NP7 5EE  
01873 854282  
<http://www.abergavennymuseum...> [abergavennymuseum@monmouths...](mailto:abergavennymuseum@monmouths...)

Find out about this historic market town. Displays include a Victorian kitchen, saddlers workshop and traditional grocers. Housed in a hunting lodge within the castle ruins. Special exhibitions. Children's activities. Shop. Visit our facebook page: Abergavenny Museum or our twitter feed @abermuseum for up to date information.

Map

Enter a Location | By car | [Get Directions](#)



**Abergavenny Museum & Castle**  
Activities and Attractions | Indoor Activities & Attractions  
The Castle, Castle St., Abergavenny NP7 5EE  
01873 854282

### County level marketing

- The County Council has invested in on-line marketing. The current 'Visitmonmouthshire' web site contains information on the Castle via its searchable 'Things to Do' listing as shown below.
- This site can also be used for listing events.



visitmonmouthshire

Select Language | [Social Media Icons]

Where to Stay | Things to do | Places to visit | Food & Drink | Events | Blog

### Refine your search

Type of Venue  
 (Any group) | (Any category) | (Any type)



Location  
 Near ... | Within 8 miles | Abergavenny

Facilities  
 Free entry  
 Accessible by public transport  
 Children welcome  
 Disabled access  
 Facilities for groups  
 Dogs accepted  
 (Any other venue amenity)

Or Venue Name  
 Search

## Abergavenny Museum and Castle

Museum, next open Fri 16 Jun - Tue 26 Sep 2017, free entry  
 VVVVAQAS

Reviews: [Icons]

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### Contact

Enquiries  
 01873 845282  
 email  
[www.abergavennymuseum.co.uk](http://www.abergavennymuseum.co.uk)  
 email a friend

Address  
 Castle Street,  
 Abergavenny,  
 Monmouthshire,  
 NP7 5EE

Also at this Venue  
 Monmouthshire Women Making Change

### Details

The Museum was founded on 2nd July 1959. The idea for a Museum was around from as early as 1903 when it was discussed and minuted by the Abergavenny Free Library Committee. At this meeting permission was given for the library to begin collecting objects. These collections remained at the library until the 1940s when it was said that they were disposed of. The demolition of the historic buildings in Tudor Street and Castle Street during the 1950s once again made people aware of the need for a museum. Alfred Jackson addressed the Rotary Club on 22nd October 1957 and a Committee was formed. Alfred and Ernest Jackson and Duggan Thacker led a group of enthusiastic volunteers and the Museum opened on 2nd July 1959.  
[www.abergavennymuseum.co.uk](http://www.abergavennymuseum.co.uk)

Opening details

Season Dates	Opening Hours
Fri 16 Jun - Tue 26 Sep 2017	Mon - Sun 11:00 to 16:00
Wed 27 Sep 2017 - Sun 27 May 2018	Mon - Tue 11:00 to 16:00   Thu - Sun 11:00 to 16:00

Open Every Day 11.00 - 16.00.  
 From 27th September until May Half Term 2018 we will be closed on Wednesdays.

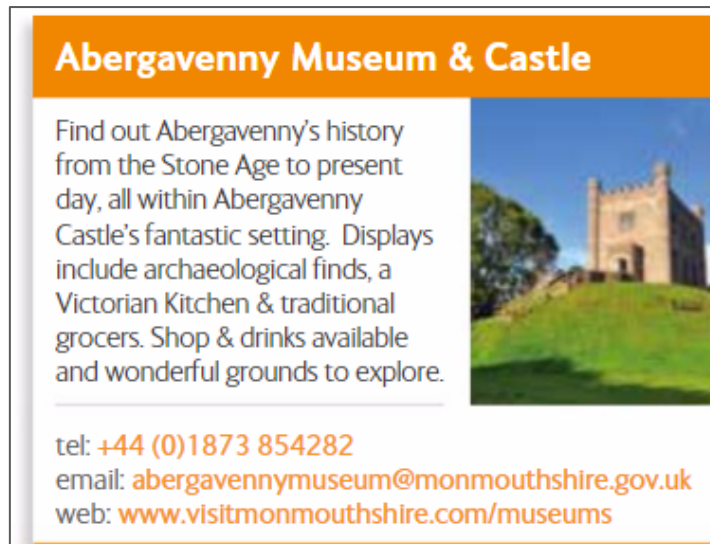
Prices  
 Free entry  
 Charges apply at some special events.

- The County also undertake other marketing activities such as attending promotional events and buying in to campaigns such as the Southern Wales Tourism Group Travel Initiative which features the Castle.

[https://issuu.com/southernwalestourism/docs/monmouthshire\\_group\\_travel\\_guide](https://issuu.com/southernwalestourism/docs/monmouthshire_group_travel_guide)

Abergavenny Museum and Castle – Events Project – Feasibility Study

39



- They also provide Digital Visitor Information Kiosks in a number of locations:
  - Abergavenny Bus Station
  - Shire Hall, Monmouth
  - Cattle Market Car Park, Monmouth
  - Castle Car Park, Chepstow
  - Roadchef Services, Magor
  - Old Station, Tintern
- Exposure via these should be maximised.
- The County supported the creation of an Ambassador team (volunteers keen to help promote the area to visitors). This is another potential source of support and promotion for the Castle.

### **Tourist Information Centres and Outlets**

- There are Tourist Information centres in Chepstow and Abergavenny, as well as Tourist Information Outlets in Caldicot, Monmouth and Usk; all of which are able to help promote the site and any events taking place there. If not done already, it would be worth offering a 'familiarisation' visit to staff from these sites.

### **Visit Wales**

- Visit Wales promotes the Country (primarily) outside of Wales. They do this in a number of ways: <http://www.visitwales.com> web site where they have a searchable listing of attractions. The listing is shown below. NB the Castle only appears under the search term for 'Museums'. The site does not appear if you search by 'Castle' or by 'History and Heritage'. This should be rectified.




## Abergavenny Museum and Castle

The Museum was founded on 2nd July 1959. The idea for a Museum was around from as early as 1903 when it was discussed and minuted by the Abergavenny Free Library Committee.




Booking and enquiries:  
+44 01873 845282

 **Monmouthshire** 0.1 miles, 0.16 km from Abergavenny.

- There are dedicated pages to the area which can be found at <http://www.visitwales.com/explore/south-wales/wye-valley-vale-usk>.
- This encourages you to download a brochure, which in turn takes you to the 2012 Visitor Guide for Wye Valley and Vale of Usk.<sup>6</sup> This carries a small advert for the Castle as well as a mention of the Castle and Museum within the 'Trails for Townies' section, shown below and overleaf.

Abergavenny B4  
**Abergavenny Museum**





Twitter Feed (@AberMuseum)  
& Facebook  
(Facebook.com/  
Abergavenny  
Museum)

**Castle Street, Abergavenny, NP7 5EE**  
**T:** 01873 854282  
**F:** 01873 736004  
**E:** [abergavennymuseum@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:abergavennymuseum@monmouthshire.gov.uk)  
**W:** [www.abergavennymuseum.co.uk](http://www.abergavennymuseum.co.uk)  
**Open:** All Year / Free Admission

Set in the picturesque grounds of a ruined castle. Objects in permanent galleries illustrate life in this historic market town. Victorian kitchen, 1940s grocer's shop and air raid shelter. Refurbished gallery hosts regular temporary exhibitions. Shop. Free entry. Parking.

**Opening Times:**  
 Mar-Oct, Mon-Sat 11am-1pm & 2pm-5pm. Sun: 2-5  
 Nov-Feb, Mon-Sat 11am-1pm & 2pm-4pm



- Visit Wales also attends trade and tourism fairs in the UK and Abroad as well as undertaking active PR. As such, it is worth informing them of any events/activities etc. as they are always on the look-out for new stories.
- <http://www.visitwales.com/working-with-us> provides information on how to ensure you: appear on their correct site searches (Kevin Ford from Monmouthshire CBC is listed as the contact for that), engage with them via social media – primarily Facebook, Twitter & Instagram and on how to list events.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.visitwales.com/~media/visit-wales/brochure-pdf/wvu2012ebrofin.ashx>

# Trails for Townies

Small enough to walk around with ease. Big enough to hold your attention for a day. Here are seven places with designated visitor trails, to make sure you see all the sights.

**FIND DETAILS OF ALL THE TRAILS AT**  
[visitwyevalley.com/info/36/trails](http://visitwyevalley.com/info/36/trails)

castles exhibitions cafés

## Abergavenny

### Trails

Not one but seven trails to choose from. It's true that some of them take you outside the town and require transport but all of them start in this market town. The most popular is the walking Trails and Tales for Families which is equally informative for adults.

### Main attractions

Castle and museum, St. Mary's Priory church, tithe barn exhibition, market hall, castle meadows.

### Independent businesses

Loads to look out for including Abergavenny Music, Alison Tod Milliner, Cooks' Galley, Gateway Cycles, Homes of Elegance, Love Lily, Martin's Jewellers, Straker Chadwick Auctioneers, The Art Shop, The Celtic Warehouse, The Wool Croft and two superb butchers, Edwards and Rawlings.

### Visitor information

The Tourist Information Centre at the bus station is open all year and there's a touch-screen kiosk outside providing essential information 24 hours a day. [visitabergavenny.co.uk](http://visitabergavenny.co.uk)

## Caerleon

### Trail

There's a Heritage Trail around this tiny town which, believe it or not, was one of the most important military sites in Britain under the Roman Empire. Channel 4's Time Team made some amazing finds during their dig here last summer. Caerleon is also home to the legend of King Arthur and there's an online quest that takes you to five important sites in the town.

### Main attractions

Roman baths, barracks, amphitheatre and museum.

### Independent businesses

Don't miss the traditional Caerleon Hardware, Sourc'd Greengrocers, The Lodge Coffee and Deli, The Giftbox, The Village Bakery and the Ffwrwm, an eclectic array of shops and places to eat in a courtyard setting full of Arthurian-inspired artworks.

### Visitor information

The Tourist Information Centre is located in High Street and is open all year. [caerleon.net](http://caerleon.net)

Left to right:  
The Market Hall clock tower and The Angel Hotel in the centre of Abergavenny  
Remains of the Roman amphitheatre in Caerleon



[visitwyevalley.com](http://visitwyevalley.com)

5

## Competition

The Castle sits in an area of Wales with a relatively rich supply of attractions and venues. An online search revealed the following:

- Attractions - The 'Visitmonmouthshire' web site lists 15 other history and heritage attractions within a 15 mile radius (see appendix 2) and 10 attraction (of any kind) within a mile of the town.
- Events – There is lots of competition on the events front too. The 'Show Me Wales' events list for the Wye Valley and Monmouthshire for the month of September alone runs to 70 events.
- Conferences and Weddings - Visit Wales list 65 conference venues within South East Wales, 11 of which are in the category 'Castles/Historic Houses/Country Retreats; and various on-line sources offer wedding venues, with one boasting 323 Wedding Venues to choose from in South Wales, 5 of which are in 'castles', 14 of which are in gardens/grounds and with some duplication, 7 are listed as outdoor.

The key to success will be creating a unique offer at the Castle. The Museum itself already offers a unique glimpse in to the history of the town and its people, and with the extra impetus provided by the recent 'Forward Plan' and the restructure, alongside initiatives like this report; it should be able to attract a wider audience.

In addition, nowhere else appears to be offering quite the same thing as is envisaged for the Castle grounds, i.e. the permanent covered structure. The business case for the structure is dealt with elsewhere, however, the marketing of the structure will be fundamental to its success. As will striking the balance of it being a 'unique' and quirky offer whilst still filling up the diary with bookings.

There will also be opportunities for making useful partnerships with some of the competitors such as joint programming, joint marketing etc.

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## 6. BUSINESS PLAN

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This section sets out; the results of a review of current income generation from events, a strategy for income generation with clearly defined aims and objectives, opportunities identified for income generation, and the ways in which issues are addressed and risks are managed.

### Review of current income generation from events

- Generating a surplus from events staged at the Castle has not necessarily been a priority until recently. This is entirely understandable. In 'pre-austerity' times, when public expenditure enabled more investment in heritage related activities 'events' were seen as more of a platform for attracting and engaging with existing and new audiences, rather than as a way of making a profit. Of course the two things aren't mutually exclusive and in an ideal world the proverbial 'win-win' solution is both sought and attained.
- As has been reported extensively in Section 2 (above) events have been staged at the Castle by the Museum's Service for quite some time. Income from events represents a positive contribution to the costs of running the Museums Service.
- However, it is probably fair to say that there has not been a strategic approach to event income generation and a SWOT analysis of the existing situation has revealed the following:

#### Strengths:

- The castle grounds are a great asset and an excellent venue for all kinds of events and there is a good demand to host events at the Castle from external event organisers.
- Existing event organisers are used to paying for use of the grounds.
- The majority of the events staged at the Castle to date have incorporated some form of charging / entry fee thereby establishing a precedence.
- Some existing and many new audiences are already happy to pay higher end 'market rates' to attend events staged at the Castle.
- The grounds have the capacity to stage a number of different (small-scale) events staged on the same day without impacting unduly on the enjoyment of the majority of visitors to the Castle and Museum.
- Museum staff and volunteers have developed a range of experiences with respect to small-scale event management and have some existing systems in place to ensure that income generating opportunities are realised.

**Weaknesses:**

- The grounds lack cover and basic facilities and this limits the nature & scale of events that can take place without temporary marquees / tents & portaloos being brought in on an event by event basis.
- The capacity of the Museum staff and volunteer team in terms of developing and delivering events / managing external event providers is limited both in terms of time and expertise.
- There is no current pricing structure and charging policy to date has been undertaken on an 'event by event' basis.
- Despite the fact some larger scale events such as the Food Festival are hosted at the Castle, the grounds are not widely recognized as an events venue.

**Opportunities:**

- To change the perception of the castle as an events venue and reach out to new audiences (younger, older, disabled people etc)
- To develop a 'quirky' / 'niche' programme of events that is suited to the Castle's own quirky / niche nature.
- To more effectively with and through existing local / regional event organisers offering them opportunities to develop and expand their 'offer' and taking an agreed proportion of the takings.
- To undertake more joint marketing / joint ticketing arrangements with other local event organisers.

**Threats:**

- Inclement weather and the impact that this can have on ground conditions during and ground recovery after an event.
- Not getting the event offer 'right' and not building sufficient momentum to attract a loyal / regular event attending audiences.
- Enforced or voluntary limitations placed on event development as a result of complaints from the general public.

**Events income generation strategy**

- The events income generation strategy has been established in light of the above review of the current situation and is clearly focused on the following:

**Aims:**

- To build on the strengths of the existing events programme and realise opportunities for income growth whilst maintaining and building relationships with key stakeholders.

- To secure a sufficient level of surplus income from the 'Events Programme' to fund a new dedicated 0.4 fte 'Events Coordinator' post for Abergavenny Museum and Castle by the end of Year 3, and beyond the end of any grant-aid that supports the post in the first three years of delivery.

### **Strategic objectives:**

- No events are to be designed to run at a loss, nor is the expectation that one type of event will subsidise the staging of another. The minimum expected is for each event type is to 'break even' over the course of a year.
- Targets for income generation for each type of event are to be set prior to the start of each events year, on a 'horses for courses' basis (i.e. taking into account the income generating potential of each event) and in the light of the relative 'performance' of that type of event in the previous year.
- Each type of event is to have its own 'mini-business plan' based on a simple forecast of income and expenditure with set targets for the surplus to be generated in the year ahead.
- Each event will be evaluated, not just on financial success, but with respect to softer outcomes, for example, community cohesion, visitor experience etc.
- The Events Programme as a whole is to complement and add value to the local event 'offer' in Abergavenny and be designed to support the growth of local event management expertise.
- A clear 'pricing structure' for each type of event / activity is to be established.

### **Income and expenditure profile**

- The Events Programme is estimated to make a small surplus each year. This will be reinvested in the programme.
- Grant support is required in the first three years if a part-time (0.4 fte) Events Coordinator post is to be established. The post is critical as this person will develop the Events Programme and help it (and the post) to become sustainable.
- The Events Coordinator post will be supported by a limited number of occasional staff and volunteers.
- The maximum number of large scale (over 100 people) events on weekends will be restricted. This will be determined through discussions between the Museum Manager and relevant Officers.

### **Issues and risks**

- Staging the events and activities described in the Events Programme above will clearly come with attendant issues and risks. The purpose here is to highlight the **main** areas of concern and to highlight the key ways in which the Museums Service will address the issues and mitigate the risks identified.



**Note:** The Museums Service and MCC Events Team have a long and strong track record of running events successfully both at Abergavenny Museum and Castle and at other heritage sites across Monmouthshire (most notably at Caldicot Castle). This Events Programme will be subject to all of the existing processes already in place to ensure above all else the Health & Safety of visitors taking part in events and associated activities. Two of the main event management practices undertaken are as follows:

- **Generic Event Plans** for each type of event that takes place with individualised Event Plans for large-scale Flagship Events.
- **Risk assessments** undertaken for all events.

#### **Noise and other disturbances**

- The Museums Service is very conscious of its obligation to minimise the risk of noise and other disturbances to its neighbours and will undertake to; give notice of evening events taking place, restricting event finish times, careful screening and positioning of p.a. equipment, conducting noise monitoring during events and using areas of the castle that are less likely to create a noise disturbance wherever possible.

#### **Impact on the heritage & castle grounds**

- The Museums Service is duty bound to look after the Castle and many of its existing programmes of work serve to achieve this end. The Museums Service has prepared a Heritage Impact Survey in order to fully understand the effects of the 'covered structure' and mitigate against this. Events will also be scheduled to enable sensible time for ground recovery.

#### **Maintaining accessibility**

- As heritage sites go the castle grounds enjoys relatively good disabled access and it will be the intention of the Museums Service, through the Events Programme, to ensure that this is maintained and enhanced. It is one of the key objectives of the Events Programme to widen access and increase the diversity of audiences building on the existing situation.

#### **Conflicts in use**

- The Museums Service is very sensitive to the needs of the many existing Museum and Castle visitors and users of the Castle grounds, as well as first time visitors coming to enjoy what the Castle has to offer. The intention in the Events Programme is very much to enhance the atmosphere by engendering a sense of vitality, but to ensure that this does not impact adversely on the enjoyment of any of its many different types of visitor. This will be achieved by; careful prior event planning and timetabling, zoning and screening as required, as well as through gentle reminders to people visiting the Castle to respect the needs of others. Exclusive use of the Castle grounds for private events will only be granted very occasionally and access to the Museum will be maintained at all other times.

**Avoiding competition with other local events**

- The Museums Service has excellent relationships with existing local event organisers and through the course of the development of the Events Programme has enhanced many of these relationships. The Museums Service will nevertheless continue to ensure that all events add value / avoid competition with what is happening locally and will continue to attend local forums that serve to discuss the development of events across Abergavenny and surrounding area.
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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Monmouthshire ‘STEAM’ Tourism Statistics 2015

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/2016/05/20/2015>

- 2015 was an exceptional year for tourism in Monmouthshire according to the county’s 2015 STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) report. The county welcomed 2.19m visitors, a 4.4% increase on the previous year and a 6.7% increase on 2013. The 4.4% increase between 2015 and 2014 is slightly higher than the currently estimated 4.2% increase for South East Wales as a whole.
- The 2.19m visitors generated 2.95m visitor days within the county, an increase of 5.2% between 2014 and 2015. Day visitor days increased by 3.8% between 2014 and 2015. The total of 1.7m day visits is the highest number for Monmouthshire since STEAM began monitoring tourism in the county seventeen years ago.
- Tourism visits to Monmouthshire were estimated to have generated a total of £187m for the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure, representing growth of 6.6% between 2014 and 2015. This increase is also slightly higher than the current South East Wales estimate of 6%.
- Staying visitors accounted for £133.79m (or 77%) of the total amount generated by tourism in 2015 with an average stay of 2.5 nights. The staying visitor market saw the highest growth levels between 2014 and 2015, driven by improved performance in both the serviced and non-serviced sectors. The 8.7% increase in serviced accommodation continues the strong growth of recent years, with an average increase of 8% per annum since 2012. The number of visitors staying in non-serviced accommodation also grew by 10.2% from 2014-2015. This is a welcome improvement following annual falls in the sector since 2011.
- Tourism visits to Monmouthshire last year were estimated to have supported 2,744 full-time equivalent jobs (FTEs). As many as 82% of these FTEs (2,246) were generated directly through visitor expenditure, with the remaining 18% being indirect and induced (498) – supported through the supply chain and further rounds of expenditure within the economy including employee spend. Tourism spend supports the most employment in the accommodation (879 FTEs) and food & drink (675 FTEs) sectors. In addition, a significant number of self-employed people in Monmouthshire earned a living from tourism.
- Tourism is a key driver of Monmouthshire’s economy, with each visitor day bringing an average of £63.19 per day to the local economy, ranging from £31.18 per day for day visitors to £158.77 per day for visitors staying in serviced accommodation. Staying visitors generated an average income for Monmouthshire of £270.70 per visitor.
- Events are an important means of attracting new visitors to a destination – often the primary or sole reason for a visit – and Monmouthshire’s growing high profile events programme undoubtedly contributed to the county’s exceptional tourism performance in 2015.
- County Councillor Bob Greenland, cabinet member with responsibility for tourism said in 2016: “As we look forward to welcoming more than 150,000 visitors to Monmouthshire’s Eisteddfod this summer, this is no time to rest on our laurels. Tourism

is a fiercely competitive marketplace and while major and high profile events attract visitors from far and wide, the visitor experience – from the welcome they receive at the event itself to where they sleep, eat, drink and shop – can have a real impact on whether they visit the area again or recommend it as a destination to friends and family. As social media and user review sites increase in importance for determining destination choice, the quality of welcome and visitor experience become ever more important.”

### **Visitor profile:**

- The proportion of visitors to Monmouthshire coming from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland was similar to the proportion of visitors who came from parts of Wales (48% and 45% respectively). Conversely, the majority of visitors to Wales as a whole were from Wales but Monmouthshire’s proximity to England would explain the higher number of English visitors. Only 7% of visitors to Monmouthshire were from overseas; however, this is higher than the average across the whole of Wales (only 4% of visitors are from overseas).
- Couples and families with young children are the most common types of visitor groups to the area; the former account for a higher proportion of visitors in Monmouthshire than is the case across Wales, whilst the reverse is true for the latter. The average number of people in each visiting party to Monmouthshire is 3.2 (2.6 adults and 0.6 children); lower than the all Wales average of 3.7 (2.7 adults and 1.0 children).
- Over a third of staying visitors to Monmouthshire were either first time visitors to Wales or new to this part of Wales (34%), which is in line with the rest of Wales overall (at 36%). Wales Visitor Survey 2016: Monmouthshire County Council - Research Report

### **Trip profile:**

- Visitors to Monmouthshire are more likely to be on a day trip than visitors to Wales as a whole (at 94% compared to 88% across Wales). The proportion of staying visitors to the area is half that of Wales overall (6% compared to 12% overall). Staying visitors stayed an average of 6.7 nights in Wales.

### **Motivations for visiting and activities undertaken:**

- Visitors to Monmouthshire were most likely to have come to the area to visit places, historical / religious sites and attractions (60%), higher than was the case among visitors to Wales as a whole (51%). This is probably higher across Monmouthshire than the All Wales average because of the interviewing locations selected in the county, for example Tintern Abbey. They were also more likely to give shopping as a reason for visiting (at 20% compared with 12% overall) or to mention attending an event, concert or sporting event (at 18% compared with 9% overall). This is no doubt because the Eisteddfod was held at Abergavenny in August 2016 and all interviewing for the Monmouthshire

'STEAM' Tourism Survey was conducted in Abergavenny town centre during the week the Eisteddfod was held (29 July to 6 August).

- The most popular activities undertaken by visitors to Monmouthshire were visiting a castle or historic attraction (44%), general sightseeing (30%), visiting a museum or heritage centre and visiting a religious site (20% for each). Arts and cultural festivals, and more specifically the Eisteddfod, were also popular, with roughly one in eight Monmouthshire visitors attending (12%), this rose to just over half of visitors to Abergavenny town centre. Outdoor activities were also relatively popular with around one in ten visiting a country park or a nature based attraction (11% for each) or walking more than two miles (9%). However, these were lower than for Wales overall (at 22%, 13% and 14% respectively).

### **Satisfaction with the overall experience, revisiting and recommending:**

- In general, visitors to Monmouthshire were highly satisfied with their visit, as eight out of ten visitors to Monmouthshire (80%) gave a score of either 9 or 10 for Wales overall as a place to visit – the average score was 9.3/10 (cf. 9.2/10 All Wales mean score).
- Wales exceeded expectations for almost half of visitors to Monmouthshire, with 47% saying that their trip was better than expected, while around half felt that their expectations had been met (51%). Only 1% of visitors to the region said that their trip was not as good as expected.
- Virtually all visitors to Monmouthshire said they were likely to return in future (95%); 84% said they would definitely visit again, while 11% would probably visit. The National Eisteddfod in 2016 was held at the Castle Meadows in Abergavenny on 29 July – 6 August. All interviewing shifts at Abergavenny town Centre were conducted during that week. Wales Visitor Survey 2016: Monmouthshire County Council - Research Report. Only a very small proportion of visitors (5%) said they were not likely to make another visit to the region.
- Reflecting the high levels of visitor satisfaction and strong likelihood of returning to Wales in future, virtually all visitors to Monmouthshire said that they would recommend it as a place to visit (96%). Staying visitors to the three town centres spent most money on their accommodation (an average of £436.28), although almost a quarter of staying visitors said they were not spending anything on accommodation, thereby suggesting that they were staying with friends or relatives.
- The second highest average spend amongst all visitors to the three town centres in Monmouthshire was on leisure activities and attractions (£62.90). Visitors spent least on travel in and around Monmouthshire, where the average spend was £23. This is because the majority of visitors to Monmouthshire travelled by private car so some of these visitors might not necessarily have factored in costs such as fuel or car running costs. (Research Report Wales Visitor Survey 2016 Monmouthshire County Council).

### Reasons for visiting:

- Visitors to Monmouthshire were most likely to have come to the area to visit places, historical / religious sites and attractions (60%), higher than was the case among visitors to Wales as a whole (51%). This is probably higher across Monmouthshire than the All Wales average because of the interviewing locations selected in the county, for example Tintern Abbey. They were also more likely to give shopping as a reason for visiting (at 20% compared with 12% overall) or to mention attending an event, concert or sporting event (at 18% compared with 9% overall). Again this is because three out of the four interviewing locations in Monmouthshire were town centres and the proportion of visitors saying they were visiting an event will be higher because interviews were conducted in Abergavenny town centre during the week the National Eisteddfod was being held there (56% said this in Abergavenny).
  - Conversely, Monmouthshire visitors were less likely to say they had come to enjoy the landscape / countryside / beach than was the case for Wales overall (40% of Monmouthshire visitors compared with 56% overall) or to take part in outdoor or sporting activities (mentioned by 14% of Monmouthshire visitors compared with 25% overall).
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## Appendix 2 – Walk through photo tour



*Entrance gate (left) Lodge (right)*



*Lawn in front of Curtain Wall - View right immediately after entering castle grounds*



*Lawn, North of defensive mound - View back to entrance gate (left)  
View left immediately after entering castle grounds (right)*





*Original castle entrance Gatehouse*



*The Outer Bailey*



*Remains of Tower at end of Museum (Left) Grassed area below Motte (Right)*



*Museum in former Hunting Lodge*



*South West Tower (left) Kitchen garden (right)*



