

Leisure Services: Covid19 Service position statement

Community & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

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Carmarthenshire
County Council



1. Introduction

1.1 This report highlights the changes and challenges the Leisure Service Division has faced during the first 6 months of 2020-21 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, whilst updating on the status of each service area and reflecting on pre-covid actions, before highlighting future challenges facing this customer facing, income generating service.

1.2 Section 2 of the report updates the current position in terms of services open, partially open, or closed.

1.3 Section 3 reviews the changes imposed upon services; sections 4 and 5 consider workforce and end-user implications; whilst section 6 considers financial implications, and section 7 reviews communication and engagement issues.

1.3 Section 8 of the report then updates on specific service areas and highlights key issues facing certain service functions, including our Theatre and Outdoor Education services.

1.4 Finally, sections 9 and 10 look forward and consider key lessons learnt.

1.5 Thoughts and comments are welcomed from members as part of this process.

2. Impact of Covid on Services

2.1 Services that continued to run throughout:

- Minimal online services: Libraries online services; National Exercise Referral scheme continued to operate virtually, supporting most vulnerable of our clients.
- Central management teams worked online throughout all closures to plan for re-opening and to devise completely new operating procedures, risk assessments and safe systems of work for all services.
- Central support functions also continued to operate to manage the thousands Actif Leisure members and Country Park season ticket holders / seasonal campsite pitch holders.
- Grant advice and support was provided by Culture to freelancers and Community Sport Officers to support third sector groups throughout the period and is ongoing.

2.2 Services closed during initial lock-down:

- Sports & Leisure: Leisure Centres; Swimming Pools; Sports-halls; Fitness Facilities; Soft-play; Outdoor Sports Areas; Specialist indoor facilities e.g. Martial arts / gymnastics facilities; Actif Community Sports Development work
- Outdoor Recreation: Parks; Playgrounds; Country Parks; Outdoor Education Centre; Specialist outdoor facilities e.g. Closed road cycle track, Ski Centre, Toboggan, Crazy Golf
- Cultural Services: Libraries; Museums; Archives; Theatres; Oriel Myrddin; Y Gat Craft Centre; and Dylan Thomas Boat-House;

2.3 Services re-started*:

- Services generally restarted in the following order: Outdoor parks; Outdoor Sports facilities; Libraries (Click ' n Collect first, then buildings / mobile services); Indoor Facilities (restricted)
- All the above had to operate to restricted capacities.
- *N.B. all Leisure services, except for Country parks and playgrounds, have had to close again for the Oct / Nov 2 week national fire-break lockdown, with only online services being able to continue operating.

2.4 Services remaining closed:

- Pendine Outdoor Education Centre
- NCE Pool (managed by Trust and undergoing £70k of essential maintenance work to re-line pool and surround). Challenges here with size of changing spaces, but facility could in theory re-open in late 2020.
- Community Libraries with capacity restrictions/limitations – Bedol, Brynamman, Whitland, Pembrey, St. Clears, Llandovery & Pontyberem.
- Theatres to live audiences
- Y Gat – due to re-open to tenants shortly
- Food and beverage provision has either ceased or been limited to take-away or outdoor provision only at many sites, albeit Yr Orsaf café, Beach Kiosk and Ski café in Pembrey Country Park did re-start an indoor socially distanced, albeit limited menu offer in late Summer
- Carmarthenshire Museum and Museum of Speed remain closed for building works – closures are not associated with COVID-19.

3. Changes to service provision due to Covid

3.1 Key legislation / regulations affecting the service

- Gatherings of no more than 30 people outdoors (affects team sports / events etc)
- 2m social distancing rule (creates huge issues in terms of capacity numbers indoors)
- Up to 15 people can gather for organised indoor activity (was 30 until First Minister's announcement on 2/11/20)
- Various regulations for all manner of different sports and activities, as outlined by the relevant national governing body e.g. indoor / outdoor; team / individual; contact / non-contact

3.2 Updated risk assessments / safe working practices

- All risk assessments have been updated as part of the recovery planning process for each service, along with Safe Systems of Work to protect staff and users, all agreed and by the Health and Safety Team

3.3 New working practices

- All normal and emergency operating procedures for every building and facility have had to be reviewed and re-written. In many instances, these have had to be re-written and updated several times as various restrictions are lifted or re-imposed.
- Online solutions have been developed to deliver some services in a different way.

- All facilities have had to operate with reduced capacities, including outdoor facilities such as Pembrey Country Park, which has been particularly challenging to manage during the latter part of Summer as huge numbers of people chose a 'staycation' for their holiday in the UK.

4. Workforce implications

4.1 Trade unions engagement

- TU's have been involved in scrutinising all recovery plans and are regularly updated through the Communities Department Trade Union Forum, and the Corporate Employee Relations Forum (CERF)

4.2 Furlough

- A total of 168 staff were furloughed across Leisure services. Advantage was taken of flexible furlough as facilities re-opened with reduced operating capacity. Staff have returned from furlough on a phased basis to be re-inducted, trained and back to their normal working roles. The Furlough was due to end on the 31st October 2020, but has subsequently been extended due to England's recent 4 week national lockdown announcement by the Prime Minister (Welsh/ Local government eligibility to claim subject to confirmation, albeit limited numbers applying for CCC with most leisure services re-opening).
- Dozens of Leisure, Culture and Outdoor Recreation staff were re-deployed to support other services or furloughed to mitigate unnecessary costs to the authority, with many staff using the time to undertake online training and to broaden their general employment skill-set.

4.3 Redeployment

- Early in lockdown, several staff were redeployed across into critical services to support areas such as Care Homes, Domiciliary Care, Cleaning, Catering, and the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) store.
- With the possibility of further fire-break lockdowns, frontline staff are being trained to work in re-deployed roles during these periods on the assumption that their posts will not be eligible for future furlough type payments.

4.4 Morale

- Generally, morale amongst members of the team has been good. All managers and staff have been offered support through the corporate well-being service and occupational health team, whilst staff working from home have been contacted and communicated with regularly to monitor and support their well-being.
- There is evidence of fatigue within some groups of staff, with many struggling to take annual leave during this period of unprecedented change, the speed and range of which is exhausting. Again, support is being provided with a clear message for staff to ensure they maintain a reasonable work-life balance, ensuring they take sufficient blocks of leave to 'switch-off' from work.

4.5 Workforce development

- Many staff have taken the opportunity to upskill during lockdown periods - some because of redeployment and learning new skills in a new role, whilst many others have completed online corporate learning courses such as Equality, Safeguarding, H&S training etc. Early in lockdown, a concerted effort was made to ensure that all staff were afforded the opportunity to access CCC web-based systems, through the 'bring your own device' policy allowing staff to have access to e-mail, Microsoft Teams and other online support systems from their own or work mobile device. This has helped greatly in leisure where many staff are employed on seasonal or short hour contracts e.g. swimming instructors.

4.6 PPE

- As with all service areas, there was some apprehension in the early stages of lockdown on the availability and need for PPE when staff returned to work. Thankfully, this situation is now clearly defined, and supplies are available as needed for front line staff, albeit, only a for limited need within the service.

5. Service user implications

5.1 Accessibility to services

- Limited capacity: The 2m social distancing rule has resulted in significantly reduced capacities for indoor spaces. As an example, and in practical terms, Amman Valley Leisure Centre's gym capacity has reduced from 53 to 10, and the pool from 109 to 21 (this may also reduce further with recent reduction from 30 to 15 for organised indoor activity gatherings).
- Online: Many services have improved their online offer. Most bookings and payments can now be made online, along with Track, Trace, and Protect registration for onsite visits. Services such as Theatres and the Actif Health and Fitness offer are investing heavily in staffing

opening, national research indicated that around 17% of people would return to such facilities straight away, around 25% would return after a few months, around 50% would return once things were 'back to normal' and around 5% would not return. It is critical that we offer a safe, trusted, and affordable product to retain both our membership, and pay as you go, user database for the longer term. Short term financial pain for long term gain is the mantra being adopted.

- The service has submitted hardship funding support claims to offset the loss of income caused by the legislative restrictions imposed upon each services area because of the pandemic. Despite 'freezing' leisure centre memberships paid via Direct Debit during this period of closure, over 600 members cancelled their memberships, equating to circa £200k income loss pa. Without Furlough and loss of income hardship funding support, the service would be £2.5m off budget target by year-end 2020-21.
- The Culture team successfully secured support from the £53m WG Cultural Resilience fund with applications totalling £191k approved to support local providers, and several others in the pipeline.

6.2 Additional costs incurred

- The main additional costs incurred by the service as a result of covid restrictions have been associated with re-shaping the physical delivery of services e.g. having to purchase screens, additional cleaning materials, additional tables / chairs for outside catering at Pembrey Country Park, and signage. These costs have not been significant though in the wider context of the budget.
- The service has invested in more technology to deliver services online e.g. equipment to broadcast live fitness sessions through our [Actif](#) Anywhere offer. Whilst this is an additional cost to the service, it is a planned investment brought forward and provides the ability for our services to access from home and thus generating additional money for the service in future years.

6.3 Sustainability

- Whilst we have been able to offset losses with hardship and other grant claims, including furlough claims for staffing costs for income generating areas like Leisure Centres, Theatres and Country Parks, the longer term picture can be viewed as presenting both challenges and opportunities. Social distancing restrictions will continue to affect capacities and thus income generation, however, the development of online products, more staycation holidays, and diversifying or combining our products provide new income generating potential.

7. Communication and engagement

7.1 Internally with staff and across organisation

- The introduction and roll-out of Microsoft teams as an online communication and collaboration platform has been vital in enabling services to function. The ability to meet online has been critical and the authority should be complimented for having the foresight to invest in IT equipment such as laptops and software packages such as team to help facilitate agile working.

7.2 With users

- Regular dialogue has been maintained with all end users and the public in general via existing communication databases and channels, including social media, fully supported, and directed by the Corporate marketing and media team. Comments from users returning to our re-modelled services have been overwhelmingly positive....



Can I just say a massive thanks you to everyone who prepared the centre for the opening. The swimming pool and changing room were spotless, and the Spin class room was squeaky clean too. You couldn't have done any more to assist us in our return. Every Covid prevention in place. Give yourselves a pat on the back. Well done and a massive applaud 🙌 from me.

Wendy Morris



Laura Evans

Excellent organisation and support at Amman Valley. Bravo 🙌. Thanks to all involved in making it safe and enjoyable for everyone 😊

Like · Reply · Message · 7w

7.3 Politically

- Whilst this was more challenging in the earlier part of the year, the EBM has been kept updated throughout by way of regular calls and online meetings to catch up on matters, plan for service recovery, and to approve any key decisions. Similarly, local members have been engaged and updated on matters pertaining to their locality and have been very supportive of the service during these very challenging times.

8. Service specific updates and issues:

8.1 Pre-Covid (in 2019-20), the Leisure Division continued to go from strength to strength and was (is) widely regarded as amongst the best in Wales. We avoided transferring services to leisure trusts and through a programme of unprecedented investment and innovation, had increased the number of users and income across all areas of the division.

8.2 (Actif) Sport & Leisure

8.2.1 2019-20 highlights and position update

8.2.2 The authority had continued to support capital investment in leisure, sport, and culture, which in turn drives up income and makes many of these non-statutory services more cost effective and sustainable.

8.2.3 Over £500k has been spent at Ammanford Leisure Centre to re-furbish the wet side changing rooms, with further plans to upgrade the all-weather pitch and improve car parking facilities on site. Carmarthen Leisure Centre's external upgrades are nearing completion, with a new 2G AstroTurf surface laid, the 4x external community Tennis Courts re-surfaced, the Athletics Track re-surfaced and widened, and additional parking and traffic calming measures in place. Works are also well underway in Llandovery, where there is a £350k investment into the school conversion to provide the town with health & fitness facilities adjacent to, and complimenting, the swimming pool.

8.2.4 Plans for the new leisure facility in Llanelli are now moving forward again with over £25 million earmarked for a new leisure centre on the Delta Lakes site. The new centre will improve access and links to the education, health and business development sectors providing a modern, vibrant, and fully integrated facility for the residents of Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, and the wider region. Additionally, it will link the wonderful Millennium Coastal Park with the town and provide the people of Llanelli with the best leisure facilities around.

8.2.5 Our Sport & Leisure services section 'Actif' continues to establish itself as a sector-leader, achieving a Gold Leisure Safety Award on its first application to RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents), which is one of the most prestigious and recognised schemes in the world, with almost 2,000 entries every year and a reach of over 7 million employees.

8.2.6 Customer service levels at our leisure centres are amongst the best in the UK and beyond (pre and during covid), with benchmarked Net Promoter Scores (NPS) from customers hitting the highest since we introduced the system 5 years ago, and mystery visits rating us 'Excellent' with a score of 75.5% countywide, with Amman Valley Leisure Centre being amongst a handful of facilities in the country to score 100%.

8.2.7 With a fresh look to the future, and prior to the pandemic, the creation of a 10-year strategy was well underway. A structural review is creating opportunities to redesign and realign services to be fit for the future, particularly with an increased focus on community sport and physical activity. As a result, we have been able to target inactive adults with a new offer of walking football, rugby and netball activities to add to our existing walking hockey offer, whilst also working with our Education Department to draw down over £50,000 of Pupil Deprivation Grant funding to enhance the activity offer in over 20 of our most deprived schools, and establishing 'Us Girls' clubs to engage girls in sport and activity - with 100% of girls reporting increased confidence as a result of attending.

8.2.8 Our internally developed Actif Physical Literacy Passports for children have also been hailed as such an effective model that Sport Wales have invested in a national partnership

with us, Welsh Triathlon and physical literacy consultants from Cardiff Metropolitan University to create a triathlon passport to be rolled out across Wales. The Carmarthenshire-based development led to 30 schools, 37 of their staff, and over 1,000 pupils being exposed to fun and progressive triathlon activity over the past 18 months.

8.2.9 Annual income at the tail end of 2019-20 was firmly over the £4m mark, thanks largely to significant and continuous growth in fitness and aquatics (both responsible for well over a million-pound income each). That's an additional million pound of income since 2012-13 representing over 30% growth and moving towards a more sustainable service with high value to our population in terms of health and wellbeing returns.

8.3 2020-21

8.3.1 The mental health & wellbeing of the population is likely to be particularly fragile in the coming months and years. Physical activity can have a positive effect in these areas, and the Actif Community Sports development team will work closely with schools and community venues & groups to ensure there are opportunities and targeted interventions in place to activate Carmarthenshire.

8.3.2 The team have recently created a comprehensive 'Club Development Toolkit' which officers will use to support the community to create strong, successful, and sustainable clubs and organisations. Sport Wales have reviewed the toolkit with the potential to develop this into a national resource.

8.3.3 We supported Sport Wales on 66 Sports Club Applications for the Emergency Relief Fund, totalling over £40k of funding to protect Clubs during lockdown. In recent months, our internal Actif community Sports team have been critical in promoting and supporting the award of Emergency Relief Funding, where Sport Wales (funding body) relied on our guidance and advice in allocating a proportion of the £500k+ of national funding to clubs and organisations in Carmarthenshire. This will continue as Sport Wales switch to an £8m+ 'Sport Relief Funding' mechanism moving forward.

8.3.4 We consulted with over 55 Clubs in 6 weeks on applications for the Be Actif Wales Fund. We held 3 Club Webinars with a total attendance of 87 Sports Clubs and Organisations (1 Welsh Only Session)

8.3.5 We worked with National Governing Bodies during every 3-week WG review cycle on their Return-to-play roadmaps and continue to support clubs in response to these changes by assisting them with: risk assessments; COVID-19 Club co-ordinator appointments; and implementing Test Track and Trace Procedures etc

8.3.6 We are also preparing to launch the Actif Communities Ambassadors programme in the shortly to increase informal physical activity opportunities in the community.

8.3.7 The team have also supported the School Holiday Hubs providing and co-ordinating activities during the lock-down periods.

8.3.8 Field Hospitals: Our Actif Facilities team helped support the conversion of Carmarthen and Llanelli Leisure Centres (as well as the Selwyn Samuel Centre and the Parc y Scarlets barn) into temporary hospitals to provide additional bed space for the NHS. [See Leaders vlog](#). More than 360 people volunteered to help set up furniture and equipment at Carmarthenshire's four field hospitals, including many of our Leisure staff.

8.3.9 We have maintained contact with 563 of our National Exercise Referral clients, making 2,878 phone calls taking nearly 1,500 hours, with 668 home programmes sent to vulnerable clients. Feedback has been hugely positive...

'Your messages have made me feel less alone'



'We are most grateful for the care and concern that has been shown us since

the fitness classes have been put on hold'

8.3.10 Business recovery: A significant amount of work will be required over the coming months and years to achieve our ambition to get services, attendances & impact, and budget to pre-COVID19 levels. This will include a phased return in line with Welsh Government advice, particularly where facility footfall will reduce because of social distancing requirements and customer comfort. This will detrimentally affect our capacity in high income areas such as gyms, fitness classes and aquatics programme, which are responsible for approximately 80% of leisure centres' income (£2.7m of £3.5m) and around two thirds of Actif's overall income (circa £4.2m).

General attendances with consideration by site and activity compared to pre-covid volumes:

- April to October 23, 2020 overall attendances of 30,837 compared to 145,462 for same period previous year. This equates to an 79% drop in attendances to facilities, this figure is adjusted for CLC and LLC variables as they were not open. It is reasonable to anticipate that attendances may improve over the remainder of the year to approximately 25 – 30% as more services and principle urban centres come online in phasing. Note additional firebreak lockdowns will impact on this statistic.
- At time of writing 2,029 members are active with the service plus an additional 1,373 Actif Anywhere memberships.
- Only core activity is available linked to fitness and swimming with some limited hire. Fitness sessions in the gym being the most popular followed by swimming.
- It is unlikely that core programmes pre-covid will return in the short to medium term to near normal levels especially in coached programmes, events, and some children's activities. Constraints on numbers of people visiting and limited sessions will continue to impact on overall attendance and receipts of income. Costs of

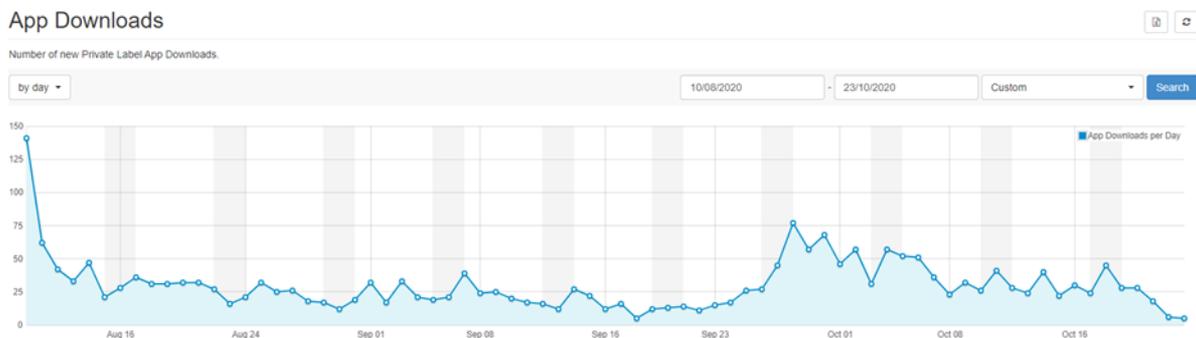
providing services however will remain largely at similar levels unless areas of service are reduced.

8.3.11 The Actif Sport & Leisure team's management staff are not only responsible for Carmarthenshire's response to the pandemic; they sit on multiple national groups leading the country's sport sector forward in this crisis. Examples include sitting on Welsh Sport Association's national 'Facilities' and 'Outdoor Sports' groups which advise Welsh Government on the easing of lockdown measures in these areas.

8.3.12 Digital Development: We have created a number of [online fitness classes](#) for our Actif Leisure members to access free of charge, and charged, during the period that our leisure facilities have been closed, whilst developing a new Actif Anywhere offer to deliver online memberships and activities in future. We continue to develop our digital capability to enhance services for staff and members of the public.

8.3.13 We were successful in being supported by the Council's Digital Transformation Fund:

- And have introduced an Actif 'App' to enable far greater functionality for the public. Already downloaded by over 4,000 users, this apps allows users to check class availability and book sessions quickly, and securely, before they arrive, plus it puts the latest news and developments, blogs, and more 'in people's pockets'. The ongoing development and promotion of this is key in the coming months.



- To introduce a workforce management solution, with a multitude of features to better manage rota's, shift allocations, clocking in/out, timesheet processing, qualification-tracking, etc. Much of the development had been completed and this will be activated once services resume.

Further digital developments include:

- The creation of 'Actif TV'. The lockdown has caused a spike in the provision and consumption of online fitness classes. We have launched 'on demand' fitness classes for the general population and for people on our 'Exercise referral scheme' so people can watch and participate in them for free any time. This has been developed by adding a livestreaming service, meaning we broadcast fitness sessions in a timetabled way, live, for customers to sign up for and attend. This will be an

integrated solution, meaning it will link with our member database system (Gladstone), so that a customer's journey with us, and charging mechanisms, will be as seamless as possible. This will be an effective tool in retaining and acquiring members during the period of disruption linked to the pandemic but will be a continuous way of enabling our members to access services 24/7.

- The introduction of 'WeCompli', an App-based tool that will enable us to set, record, track and report on checks in our facilities. These can range from procedural, cleaning, temperatures, maintenance, etc. and will certainly be used for 'COVID' checks in the coming months at least as additional operational measures are put in place. Feeding through to 'dashboards' at multiple levels of management, we can be assured that our individual and groups of facilities are safe and clean, and that issues are recognised and addressed as they occur.

8.2 Outdoor Recreation

2019-20 highlights and 2020-21 position update

8.2.1 On the back of the successful delivery of the Men's Tour of Britain, Pembrey Country Park hosted the final stage of the Women's Tour of Britain in June 2019 with spectators witnessing an exciting and enthralling sprint finish on the National Closed Road Circuit. Further high-profile events followed including the Junior Tour of Wales, a leg of the National Cyclo-Cross Series, and hosting Welsh Athletics National Cross-Country Championships. Our ambition to become the Cycling Hub of Wales is now well established, and investment is still ongoing in local, urban and competition-standard infrastructure, all underpinned by plans for more events and development work in the future. Pembrey Country Park also developed a quality family aimed programme based on a financially sustainable model including annual events and activities at Halloween, Easter, Christmas and during the Summer holidays.

8.2.2 In July 2019, the first ever Green Flag was awarded to Pembrey Country Park on the same day that the new Yr Orsaf Restaurant building, which contains outside toilets, a visitor centre, offices, and function room, was opened. It represented a proud moment in Pembrey's long and rich history, and the Park is now the only facility in Wales to hold both the Green and Blue Flags at the same time. The Park was re-awarded the Green Flag in 2020.

8.2.3 The Council's investment at Pembrey Country Park continued with the first phase of the Park's Masterplan being completed. The improvements to the Park's infrastructure have including the re-modelling and improvements to the new entry and exit system for the Park operation through an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system. This also controls the entrance to the Beach and the Campsite. New bi-lingual signage has been completed along with a new BMX Pump track, new toilets by the playground area, and a new Adventure Golf Course. At the same time, all food and beverage provision across the Park has been brought in house under the internal Park team.

8.2.4 Coastal communities and Outdoor facility such as PCP saw positive trends in August / early Sept in terms of footfall and potential income. Whilst still trading at 70% occupancy rate in the campsite at Pembrey (with restricted access to amenity facilities etc), looking forward, there is scope to see this income target increase as with entry fees / season tickets, however, much of the income within the park still comes from activities and F&B sales within the park, all of which are still inhibited by social distancing regs.

8.2.5 New facilities also opened in and around Burry Port Harbour with the highlights being the new RNLI Lifeboat Station on the East side of the Harbour, and new the playground on the West side. Burry Port Marina Ltd, who now operate the Harbour on behalf of the Council, are progressing with the dredging of the harbour and its approach channel, as well as finalising designs to ref-furbish the old RNLI building into a harbour office with modern shower / changing facilities for users, and a public café and ancillary facilities for the users of the harbour. High priority work to repair the listed Harbour walls have now commenced and are scheduled to be completed by early Summer 2021. A franchise has been let for new public toilets and a café on the West side of the Harbour, and discussions are ongoing with Burry Port Town Council with regards their plans for additional toilets around the harbour. Finally, options are being considered bespoke motorhome parking facilities along the Carmarthenshire Coast, and specifically in Burry Port, aligning to the wider Regeneration masterplan for the area.

8.2.6.1 Pendine Outdoor Education Centre continued to deliver high quality residential and non-residential activities in 2019-20, in an inspirational learning environment which challenges and develops the potential of all attendees. However, the enforced coronavirus shut-down and subsequent restrictions have kept the facility closed for the first 6 months of 2020-21 and is likely to remain closed through until September 2021. Some staff have been furloughed / redeployed, whilst the service manager and assistant work with colleagues in the Education department and school heads to re-model what the service could look like in future, with less reliance on the ageing facilities on the current site. The service is valued for its residential and learning experience, and it's evolution will be further guided by the new curriculum in Wales and informed by the result of a survey to all schools in the County. A presentation to consult on the potential re-modelling of the service will be shared with Community Scrutiny members in due course.

8.2.6.2 The Pendine attractor project is being developed in collaboration with colleagues from the Regeneration Division and Pendine Community Council. A joint report will be presented to members in due course updating on the status and timeline for the project which includes new parking provision, a new 42 bed eco Hostel, a new themed outdoor playground facility and sand sports area; a new and significantly upgraded Museum of Speed; and a 11 bay Motorhome facility.

8.2.7 The public have rediscovered their love of walking, nature and the great outdoors whilst using the authority's vast network of public rights of way and footpaths. Outdoor spaces such as Pembrey Country Park, Llyn Llech Owain Country Park, the Millennium Coastal Park and Mynydd Mawr Woodland Park were amongst the first spaces to re-open allowing people to maintain their physical and mental well-being. We have recently secured

£130k from the Valleys Regional Park fund to invest at Llyn Llech Owain as part of a wider masterplan for that facility. Plans include a new toddler play area, improvements to the entrance and walkways, and enhanced outdoor area for the café (which also has new operators), and improvements to the Boardwalk and Visitor Centre.

8.2.8 More than ever before we have realised that our natural environment is vital for our well-being. Wild and natural landscapes sustain us; they give us clean water to drink and fresh air to breathe, they store carbon and protect our homes from flooding, and they can help make us happy and healthy. Nature gives us the foundations for our economy, energy system and our food and farming. Biodiversity and nature's contributions to people are our common heritage and humanity's most important life-supporting 'safety net'.

8.3 Culture

2019-20 highlights and 2020-21 position update

8.3.1 The Carmarthenshire Culture Awards, shone a spotlight on the breadth and depth of cultural activity and talent we have across the County at the Ffwrnes Theatre in April 2019. Winners were chosen from public nominations across 6 categories - excellence in Visual Arts & Crafts, Performing Arts, Creative Media, Literature, Heritage and Music. There were also winners in two special categories. The award for Young Talent went to Cerys Angharad, a 10-year old harpist who has already won numerous national awards, and Outstanding Contribution to Culture went to Gwyn Nicholas, musical director of Côr Llanpumsaint, a mixed choir open to all abilities and ages and which celebrates 40 years this year. Whitland and Drefach Felindre also held a series of successful events as the Town & Village of Culture 2019. The 2020 event will be held once the COVID restrictions are relaxed and the concept for these awards is now well established for future years to continue.

8.3.2.1 Theatrau Sir Gar launched its Arts Ambassador scheme which has grown to involve around 20 people from diverse backgrounds with varying roles and one common theme – they are all passionate about the Arts. They help the theatre on a voluntary basis, in exchange for time credits, acting as community networkers, getting involved creatively with theatre projects or representing the theatre in a meet and greet capacity, helping develop enthusiasm and audiences for the future.

8.3.2.2 Our Theatres continue to face huge challenges during the coronavirus pandemic, being one of the few indoor services that still aren't allowed to operate under Government restrictions. That said, the team have been exceptionally busy in allocating £300k of Cultural support grants to freelancers over recent weeks, funding that is proving critical to the very existence of some of these acts. The Theatres team have also been developing their [Theatrau Sir Gar online](#) offer, with a view to developing hybrid, live and broadcast productions in future as well as exploring greater opportunities to broadcast into homes, care homes, town centre squares, and developing live outdoor productions in places like our Country Parks. About half of theatres staff will be redeployed to critical services from November whilst the theatres remain closed.

8.3.3 Funding has been secured to cement the future of Oriel Myrddin as the foremost visual arts and crafts gallery in West Wales. A development project that will see £1.9m invested to refurbish and extend the gallery which will in future have the capacity and security standards to attract loans from National art collections. 2019/20 saw activities continue to focus on the importance of participation in the arts to wellbeing such as the monthly arts club for older people at the Cartref Cynnes extra care scheme in Johnstown which has seen attendees, many of whom are over 90 experimenting with printmaking, collage and textures. During 2020/21 the focus has been on the development of online activities with Criw Celf and the Young Artists club delivered through this medium.

8.3.4.1 Our library service continues to go from strength to strength and has maintained its standard of excellence in the latest review of achievement of the Welsh Public Library Standards. In 2019-20 over 1 million physical visits were made to Carmarthenshire libraries and over a quarter of a million virtual visits. This makes our libraries amongst the most used of all council services. Carmarthen library has had a facelift as part of the scheme to extend and improve the overall appearance in preparation for the return and launch of the new archive repository, hopefully in Spring 2021.

8.3.4.2 Our new Archive Building is complete at the rear of Carmarthen Library, and a new Archives Development Manager starts in November 2020, with their first role being to bring the fantastic Carmarthenshire collection 'home'. The National Library Wales also plan to bring their 'Clip centre' to Carmarthen library during 2021 to enhance the new digital and exhibition area in the reference library, which hosted its first exhibition through the Summer of 2019. Our Library services continued to provide access to our [online Library](#) offer to tens of thousands of residents throughout the lockdown period, whilst developing a new 'click 'n collect service as part of their phased recovery plan.

8.3.5 Contractors are on site at the County Museum making substantial progress on the improvements to the roof and entrance of the building where £1m is being invested as we start to return the Bishop's Palace to its former glory. The scheme is expected to conclude over the coming months with visitors hopefully able to return (subject to Covid) during 2021. Those visitors will also be able to enjoy enhanced customer facilities and experiences later in 2021 as the Tywi Gateway Trust continue with the improvements to the outbuildings, Bishop's Park, and walled garden.

8.3.6 We continue to work in a successful collaboration with Llanelli Town Council, supporting the development of Parc Howard mansion house and grounds, which saw the museum shortlisted for the 'Kids In Museums' Family Friendly Museum award in the small museums category in Summer 2019. Finally, within the Museums service, the shape of the new Museum of Speed in Pendine is obvious for all to see on site as part of the Pendine Attractor site, and as the exciting exhibition designs are concluded.

8.3.7 Discussions are ongoing with St Clears Town Council with regards the future of Y Gat Craft Centre in St. Clears. The facility is currently closed due to covid-19 restrictions;

however, we hope to see tenants back in the building shortly. Further updates will be shared with Community Scrutiny members as discussions develop with this facility.

9 Looking forward

9.1 Risks

- Loss of membership and usage due to new habits having formed and people finding alternative ways to enjoy their free-time and maintain their health.
- Community clubs and groups folding
- Availability of capital funding for schemes in development.

9.2 Opportunities

- Diversifying the products we offer, e.g. expanding the broad 'leisure' offer by looking at town centres as possible locations for non-traditional sport and culture related activities e.g. town centre gyms; adrenaline / activity structures / climbing walls; crazy golf; street theatre; pop up Arts studios; mini zip wire / high ropes facilities etc
- Combining products with other services e.g. Theatres productions and care home activities – can we 'stream' our shows onto big screens within care homes?

10 Lessons learnt.

10.1 What's worked well?

- Feedback from our staff and public on how safe they feel using our services has been very, very positive.
- The move to online services has been very positive and accelerated because of Covid.
- See Appendix 1 'Leisure Recovery plan' for emerging themes.

10.2 What would we do differently?

- The lack of IT equipment, particularly at the beginning of the lockdown restricted what staff could do, particularly working from home, although this barrier has been gradually overcome.
- Different assessments of risk and interpretation of WG guidelines meant that there was a divergence between library services re-opening in different authorities across Wales, often in neighbouring councils, which presented a potentially confusing offer for the public so a more streamlined national approach might have been considered.

RESET

It is not going to be a case of restarting and getting back to the way we were. This is an opportunity to refresh and renew as we mean to go on. One thing is evident, we cannot and will not be returning to the pre COVID-19 "*status quo*".



1. We must make sure that we learn from this unprecedented experience as we reintroduce our services and re-set our strategic and operational priorities. We must identify our key learning points at an organisational level and across the breadth of our services. To

achieve this our Transformation and Innovation and Change Team is undertaking a strategic evaluation.

2. We will also need to reset our Leisure vision, aligning to any chances within corporate documents such as *'Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire 5 Year Plan'*, *Corporate Strategy* and our *Well-being Objectives*.
3. We will need to reconsider our 2020-21 business plans, what we monitor throughout the remainder of 2020/21 and begin to shape our 2021/22 Business Planning approach.
4. Our pre-COVID-19 UK economy prioritised economic growth, forced many people into poverty, and in turn created an unhealthy population that is particularly susceptible to global crises such as pandemics. It's vital that the reset addresses things we can't afford to ignore – such as the current health crisis, the economic crisis the pandemic has triggered and the ongoing climate and nature crises. We have an opportunity to lead the way with visionary ideas and transformative investment, to a future based on well-being.
5. Digital solutions will play an ever-increasing role in shaping what we do.
6. In May, the Future Generations Commissioner published her report on the progress of the future Generations Act and made a number of recommendations for the future that we must consider across all services. [Link to the Future Generations Report 2020](#)

WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT (WALES) 2015

This is an Act introduced by the Welsh Government which will change aspects of how we work. The general purpose of the Act, is to ensure that the governance arrangements of public bodies for improving the well-being of Wales, take the needs of future generations into account. The Act is designed to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wales, in accordance with sustainable development principles. The law states that: -

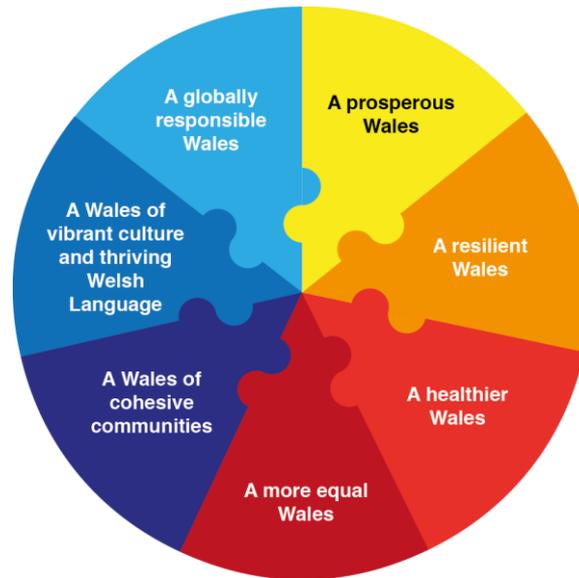
- a) We must carry out sustainable development, improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The sustainable development principle is

'... the public body must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

- b) We must demonstrate 5 ways of working:

Long term, integrated, involving, collaborative and preventative

- c) We must work towards achieving all of the 7 national well-being goals in the Act. Together they provide a shared vision for public bodies to work towards.



For the first time in Wales, the Well-being of Future Generations Act, provides a shared vision for all public bodies in Wales to work towards. Each public body in Wales is required by law to set and publish Well-being Objectives that maximise our contribution to these national Well-being Goals. In Carmarthenshire we have incorporated these Well-being Objectives into our Corporate Strategy 2018-23 and our Leisure services business planning process.

'Life is for living, let's start, live and age well in a healthy, safe and prosperous environment'