

Dear Rhodri

Thank you for the invitation from the Petitions Committee Chair to respond to the above issue. We note the Chair's request for feedback as soon as possible. The following is a joint holding response from Capital Region Tourism and the South East Wales Tourism Forum, chaired by Mandy Davies. If either organisation has more to add, as and when there is an opportunity to further discuss the issue, I will let you know.

Capital Region Tourism is the regional tourism partnership serving South East Wales, with responsibilities and resources devolved from Visit Wales to deliver the tourism strategy for the region. All SE Wales local authorities (including 5 on the coast) together with industry representatives elected from across the region serve on CRT's board of management. CRT is the lead body for tourism in the region.

The South East Wales Tourism Forum is the umbrella body for all local tourism associations and other industry groups active in the region and acts as a conduit for communication with the Wales Tourism Alliance, government and other stakeholders.

We note with concern the proposal to close the Swansea coastguard station which currently provides cover along the South Wales coast. Tourism is more important to the economy of Wales than any other part of the UK and a high quality visitor experience is predicated on providing a safe and accessible environment. We understand that Swansea coastguard station dealt with 2074 incidents in 2010 alone and is the second busiest station in the UK in respect of inshore search and rescue activities. This is particularly important for coastal tourism where the majority of activity is on or near the shoreline and where detailed local knowledge of coastal waters and topography is vital if and when visitors get into trouble. The decision to reduce coverage seems particularly counter-intuitive when Wales is currently: seeking an increase in Cruise calls; making significant investments in centres of excellence for watersports, including Swansea Bay; increasing the number of sailing berths and moorings in places such as Porthcawl; improving the quality of beach management and bathing waters (Green Seas) and opening the All-Wales Coast Path in 2012 - all in a region which enjoys the second highest tidal range in the world.

We are not sure whether tourism interests have been formally consulted - certainly this is the first time we have been contacted on the subject - and trust that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency will rethink its proposals regarding Wales

Thank you again for giving us the opportunity to comment. We would be pleased to expand on any of the points raised if required

Peter

Peter Cole
Regional Strategy Director