

REPORT OF CASTELL HENLLYS MANAGER

SUBJECT: CASTELL HENLLYS

This report reviews recent progress at Castell Henllys from operational and projects perspectives.

1. OPERATIONS

The operational emphasis in recent years has been on commercial performance. This can be measured in several ways.

1.1 Visitor Numbers

Comparison figures for visitor throughput in the last three years show that despite the economic downturn the numbers are holding up quite well (28,000 visitors in 2011 compared to 27,000 in 2010 and 29,400 in 2009).

A visitor survey is conducted so that we can monitor their enjoyment and understanding of the site and the wider National Park issues. In 2011 it was extremely pleasing to note that 87.5% of visitors left feeling that they had a wider understanding of the history of the National Park and that 98.5% considered the visit to Castell Henllys was value for money.

1.2 Education

The Castell Henllys Educational Programme for schools continues to be successful with circa 6,000 school children visiting the site to participate in the programme each year. The number of schools visiting in 2011 was down slightly on previous years (120 schools in 2011, 144 in 2010 and 145 in 2009). It has been noted over the years that these figures fluctuate according to whether or not schools are studying the Iron Age (some schools study the Iron Age every year, some every two years etc).

The Educational Programme has won the prestigious Sandford Award for Heritage Education three times (1999, 2004 and 2009). This has been mainly due to the hard work and dedication of the team which was highlighted in the 2009 report for the award.

1.3 Income

It is pleasing to report that the total annual income for admissions and sales has gone up by 6.5% from £120,168 in 2010 to £128,654 in 2011 (Admissions accounts for 3.84%, retail 2.10% and school visits the remainder). The spend per person has remained consistent at £1.96 compared with £1.99 last year.

1.4 Expenditure

Over the last three years there has been a concentrated effort to reduce the overall net operating cost of running Castell Henllys. We were asked to make a saving of 19% and have been successful in saving £34,511 in the last three years (£5440 in 2009 a saving of 5.51% on the annual budget, £10,071 in 2010 a saving of 9.57% and £19,000 in 2011 a saving of 19.01%). In 2011 the savings were generated via the following:

Staffing:	c£3000
Outdoor tools:	c£1000
Stationery, advertising etc	c£2000
Merchandise purchasing:	c£2000
Telephone/Fax:	c£1000
Pension costs:	c£1100

The increased income of £8,486 bolstered the cost cutting to generate the savings of £19,000 in 2011.

These “savings” have been achieved in no small part by the major effort and contribution of every team member in driving down costs.

1.5 Staffing

There is a small team of dedicated staff at Castell Henllys. The Centre Manager keeps the site operational throughout the year along with a pool of contributors to the educational programme for schools (which is available from January to December). During the main season (April to end of October) the team consists of an Administrative Assistant/Stock Clerk who works 5 days a week as per the rota, four seasonal Site Discovery Guides and a group of events contributors. We are extremely fortunate to have this small but dedicated team who bring a vast range of expertise and experience when dealing with the many issues that arise in running a heritage tourist site. They are flexible and can turn their hand to many tasks from working with schools to conducting a guided tour to covering the counter in Reception. The same part time staff return year after year which shows a real dedication and commitment to the site.

1.6 Community

The Castell Henllys Stakeholder Group draws on representatives from many community groups including local tourism associations, archaeological trusts, county councillors. The group meets twice a year and is an excellent opportunity to highlight the work carried out at Castell Henllys and to look forward to future developments.

We have a close relationship with the local primary school at Eglwyswrw and are keen to expand this to include Ysgol Bro Ingli and the broader local communities.

1.7 Maintenance

There has been one major issue this year concerning the trees on site. On the night of Saturday June 2nd one of the trees on the slope below the fort fell bringing two more trees down with it. They completely blocked the path and had to be removed before the site could open on the Sunday. An

outside contractor was used to cut up the trees and make the path safe. The fallen trees also highlighted the unstable nature of the trees growing on the slope so a full tree inspection of the site was carried out by Treeworks West Wales. They recommended that several trees be felled immediately as they were deemed to be dangerous to visitors and staff. The full report should be available shortly along with their recommendation as to how often these inspections should be undertaken. This could have major cost repercussions in the future.

The staff restructuring at the beginning of 2012 has seen the site warden moving to the National Park Delivery Department. He is now part of the North Area Management Team along with seven area wardens and the Cilrhedyn Woodland Team. Despite initial trepidation the new structure is working well with a good working relationship developing between the Castell Henllys Manager and the North Area Manager. The warden is still based at Castell Henllys so the actual day to day site maintenance has changed very little.

2. ORIGINS

2.1 Background

Members have previously considered the performance of our centres (Castell Henllys, Carew, Tenby, Newport, St Davids) in detail (Director of Recreation, Marketing & Communications report of 22nd June 2011) with a particular focus on cost reduction.

The approach has led to substantial savings (in excess of those targeted!) and for which the Centre Managers and Teams are to be congratulated.

In addition to reducing costs, Centre Managers have also been looking at increasing income.

At Castell Henllys the “offer” (both the physical entity and the visitor experience) is in need of being “refreshed” and, as a result, a critical review has commenced.

The aim will be to improve visitor numbers, visitor spend and ‘Park messages’ and “prehistory messages” content, so as to maximise the effective contribution of Castell Henllys to the work of the Park Authority.

2.2 Introduction

This has proved timely in that it coincides with a new external funding initiative called “Origins”. The initiative is being managed by Cadw which is keen to improve the care and understanding of Wales’ Built Heritage and to this end has developed a national themed programme of interpretation, the delivery of which is partly being aided by EU/TMF funding.

Origins is aimed at improving the coordinated interpretation of the prehistory of Wales as part of Cadw’s National Interpretation Plan for the

improved understanding of Wales' heritage. Castell Henllys has been awarded £171,000 under the initiative and a further £109,000 from the Targeted Match Funding from the Welsh Government to which the National Park Authority is committed to adding a further £100,000 (£50,000 in cash, £50,000 in kind). In addition and acknowledging the potential importance of ICT to the site's future, a bid has been submitted to Visit Wales under their Digital Tourism Project to commission a study into the opportunities for ICT at the centre.

Under the external funding scheme the project is required to:

- 2.2.1 Complete all works and claim funds by 31st Dec 2014.
- 2.2.2 Increase visitor numbers by 10,000 pa
- 2.2.3 Create a hub for the interpretation of prehistory in Pembrokeshire and beyond by developing linkages with other prehistoric sites and features
- 2.2.4 Create 6.5 indirect jobs
- 2.2.5 Improve and upgrade site facilities, skills and marketing at Castell Henllys

2.3 Process

Acknowledging the key role of the centre Team in determining its future, a preliminary meeting has been held with them to discuss the way forward, and subsequently a series of participative workshops involving centre staff and representatives from a whole range of relevant disciplines and organisations including CCW, Dyfed Archaeology, PCC, Visit Wales etc.

The approach has generated extremely positive and creative responses and has now been drafted into a preliminary report which has identified the following key themes:

- 2.3.1 There was unanimous agreement by the stakeholders that Castell Henllys' 'Unique Selling Point (USP)' is its reconstructed round houses on the site of an original fort and that the integrity and authenticity of this "offer" should not be compromised.
- 2.3.2 This "offer" however is perceived to be limited.
- 2.3.3 The "educational" offer is focused at Primary Schools with numbers of children remaining constant at c 6,000 pa over many years.
- 2.3.4 The "general" offer is largely during daytime, summer months and general interest with numbers of general visitors remaining constant at c 24,000 pa for many years.
- 2.3.5 While the prehistory education offer is award winning its relevance to Park purposes (e.g. wider issues of sustainability, outdoor recreation, climate change and landscape management) are not fully maximised.
- 2.3.6 The links between the prehistory offer and the other site features (e.g. river, woodland, birds, otters etc) are underdeveloped.
- 2.3.7 The links between Castell Henllys' pre-history offer and other prehistoric sites are underdeveloped.
- 2.3.8 The potential Castell Henllys offer is more than prehistory and could include natural history, art, music, creativity, culture,

relaxation/general interest, science and technology, building conservation etc.

2.3.9 The challenge for Castell Henllys is to ensure that this “secondary” potential is harnessed so as to complement/support it’s USP.

2.4 The Way Forward

To take the project forward a four stage approach is recommended:

2.4.1 **Research**

2.4.1.1 Market research – Demand/supply/primary spend/secondary spend (retail/catering) community benefits.

2.4.1.2 An over arching review of the potential of ICT

2.4.1.3 An over arching review of environmental sustainability (particularly relating to buildings which need to be long life , loose fit and low energy) and existing processes and their communication.

2.4.2 **Development**

2.4.2.1 Based on the findings of the research phase the next phase will be to develop an appropriate marketing mix (to reflect price, produce, place, promotion, physical evidence, processes and people).

2.4.2.2 Development of messages and media in relation to key markets

2.4.2.3 Development of an accommodation review to provide for any alterations to existing, extensions and new build.

2.4.3 **Implementation**

2.4.4 **Monitor and review**

Research				
Development				
Implementation				
Monitoring				

2.5 Next Steps

2.5.1 The first draft report will now be circulated to stakeholders including the Castell Henllys Steering Group (on which the Authority is represented by Cllr. Tony Brinsden and Cllr Paul Harries) inviting their comments. The report will then be amended in the light of the comments received.

2.5.2 A detailed Business Plan will then be developed and the plan will be submitted to both our Core Management Team to ensure its strategic alignment and also to Cadw and Visit Wales as the basis

of funding bids. Subject to their agreements being obtained the implementation phase can then commence.

2.6 Programme

2.6.1 All of this has to be completed by the end of 2014. In reality this is an incredibly tight programme but presents an exciting opportunity to revitalise one of our unique facilities.

Members will of course be kept advised of ongoing progress throughout the project.

For further information, please contact Phil Roach, Head of Discovery on ext. 4859)