

## **Swansea Bay Futures Summary Report: 2008/09**

Swansea Bay Futures (SBF) has just completed its third year of operation, having been launched in March 2006 with the purpose of promoting the Swansea Bay region as a place to live, work, study, invest in and visit, in order to have a positive impact on the regional economy.

The aim of this report is to provide a summary of what has been achieved during that time and to outline our plans for 2009/10.

If you have any questions or comments then please get in touch with me, Peter Jones or any other member of the Swansea Bay Futures Board.

### **The story so far**

Since its inception, **SBF itself** has developed to become an important organisation for the region which

- has a strong Board and Partners, giving contacts and connectivity at a high level with people who can make a difference
- is small and flexible, able to respond quickly to opportunities and needs
- has hard working staff with a 'can do' attitude and who take a bespoke approach to opportunities rather than 'one size fits all'. The staff are responsive and take ownership of enquiries and opportunities, ensuring they are dealt with or brought to the attention of the right people
- is not constrained by administrative boundaries, but is able to pick up promotional activity that cuts across sectors or geographic boundaries or falls outside the direct remit of existing organisations
- is becoming increasingly known as a useful and credible source of up to date information, providing professional materials for others to use

In terms of its goals, there have been a number of significant developments which are important for the company.

- **SBF has become truly regional**
  - All 3 Local Authorities in the area are now actively working with SBF and are represented on the Board
  - The 'Bay of Life' brand has been evolved to be regionally representative
  - Formal joint working has been agreed with Swansea Bay Partnership, so that SBF will be working integrally with the Partnership, taking the lead on place marketing for the region
- **The company has a broad range of Partners**
  - Covering a range of sectors: Local Government, National Government, Higher Education, Further Education, Professional Services, Transport, Social Housing & Development, Information Technology, Tourism, Food
  - A spread of local, national & international companies
  - Based mostly, but not solely, within the region

- **Links have been developed with other organisations** – Cardiff & Co, Newport Unlimited, WWCC, Tourism Swansea Bay, Swansea Business Club, Wales in London... although there are a number of others which we would like to work with more closely

### **Making a difference**

Given the difficulty in measuring direct impacts it is important to ask the question of whether the existence of SBF has made a difference. We think it has – and in a number of ways

- **SBF has become a source of information for the region**
  - Dealing with enquiries via WWCC, via Council press teams, via the website directly, via link companies
  - It holds and keeps updated a wealth of resources: information – statistics, facts, quotes; images; promotional materials – website, brochures, DVDs, Swansea Bay gifts, chocolates, welcome packs, presentations, screensavers, e-cards; Guide to Living and Working in Swansea Bay; Senior Managers' Briefing
- **We have worked with and supported our Partners and Associates in a way which promotes the region**, some examples being
  - Staff recruitment
  - Student recruitment
  - Attracting conferences and events
  - In region conference and key visitor support
  - Gaining input and raising awareness of important campaigns for the region e.g. Cardiff Airport business flights demand investigation, Swansea Cork Ferry investment
  - Provided promotional resources to support their own activity
- **SBF has undertaken a wide range of promotional activity**
  - Linking with major events
  - Working with key venues and other organisations willing to promote Swansea Bay
  - Undertaking promotions such as direct mailings, advertising, advertorials and securing editorial coverage
  - On line promotion of Swansea Bay, focusing on the website, by linking to other sites, undertaking on line advertising and gaining profile on social networking channels
  - Collating and spreading positive news about Swansea Bay, its companies, the latest developments and the fantastic built and natural environment on offer here – as recognised by others

### **Measuring Success**

It is extremely difficult to measure the impacts of our activity as SBF is usually just one part of the mix. Our purpose is to get Swansea Bay onto the consideration list, whether this then leads to positive action is down to other detailed factors such as site and premises, grants, courses, etc. We can, however, measure the outputs and the reach of our activity.

- In **2008/09 alone** it is estimated that through activity undertaken by SBF
- **9,944** people directly received information about Swansea Bay through mailings, information and welcome packs, press information and other promotional materials
  - Over **1.3 million** people had the opportunity to view materials which promote Swansea Bay – through editorials, advertising and promotional displays at key locations

This excludes the monthly **Bay of Life Watch newsletter** which contains positive news on Swansea Bay and is directly sent to almost **700** individuals **each month**. Through onward circulation and a presence on link sites, it has the potential to reach an audience of more than **10,000 each month**.

The figures also exclude one of the company's key fulfilment tools - [www.abayoflife.com](http://www.abayoflife.com) which in 2008/09 was visited by **28,000 visitors**, viewing over **98,000 pages**.

To achieve this reach, since 2006 SBF has worked with **18 separate major events** such as Dylan Thomas Prize, Junior Rugby World Championships and Swansea Bay Film Festival. It has also undertaken **22 direct promotional initiatives**.

We ended the 3<sup>rd</sup> year with **20 Premier Partners or Partners**, as set out below, and **13 Associate Companies**. We are grateful to all of them for their support as they have not just provided financial support for the work of SBF but have shown their commitment to helping the Swansea Bay region achieve its potential by working with us on initiatives and opportunities.



SBF has provided support to or linked with our Partners on more than **500 occasions** over the last 3 years. Activity has ranged in nature from support for recruitment to welcoming key visitors; from gaining the views of the business population in the region to providing a wide variety of resources. In many cases these resources have then been used to help the Swansea Bay message reach an even wider audience.

So whilst it is difficult to measure the direct impact of our activity, we can be sure that through SBF's work, positive messages about the Swansea Bay region are certainly reaching a wider audience than ever before.

### **Looking to the future**

Raising profile and changing perceptions is not achieved overnight. We need those based within the region or interested in seeing it develop and grow to be all heading in the same direction... and in it for the long term. It is particularly critical in the present economic climate that we continue the work to ensure that Swansea Bay is well placed to take advantage of the upturn when it comes.

The Board of SBF recently undertook a strategic review of the company and confirmed that its objectives are still valid. We will therefore continue to promote Swansea Bay as a place to live, work, study, invest in and visit, in order to have a positive impact on the regional economy. The focus for SBF is on getting attention on the region, acting as a conduit and linking through to the specialists in any sector to achieve conversion.

SBF will continue to develop its role as a resource for the region and, in order to maximise the impact, our activity will be focused on half open doors – i.e. when the target audience are predisposed to receive positive messages about Swansea Bay.

Over the coming year we will be aiming to

- increase the use of the many opportunities available by working even more closely with Partners and others
- highlight and use key events and initiatives taking place here to promote the region in its widest sense
- increase links with other organisations who have common interests in the development of the region and attracting individuals and companies here
- increase the input of SBF, its Board and Partners into strategic initiatives
- continue to update and develop promotional resources for ourselves and others to use
- secure the resources to enable SBF to do even more to continually promote the region

### **And finally...**

On behalf of the Board I would like to thank all of those who have worked with us over the last 3 years for their commitment and support. As a not for profit company which works with a small budget, we rely on the financial support and willingness of others to work with us to help us achieve our goals. The more companies, organisations and individuals that work with Swansea Bay Futures, the greater our impact and level of success will be. Together we can achieve what we all want for Swansea Bay... a thriving modern city, at the heart of a successful, growing and developing region, which is positively recognised and in which people want to live, work, study, invest and visit.

Fiona Rees  
Executive Director  
April 2009